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IN THE RING.

A NOVEL.

BY

LILY TINSLEY,

AUTHOR OF "A WOMAN'S REVENGE," "THE WRECKER'S DAUGHTER,"
"THE LION QUEEN," "SHADOWS," "AT THE CROSS ROADS."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON: TINSLEY BROTHERS,
8 CATHERINE STREET, STRAND.

1886.

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C O N T E N T S.



CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
THE GRAND CIRCUS,	1

CHAPTER II.

A FRIEND IN NEED,	17
-----------------------------	----

CHAPTER III.

FRIENDS AND FOES,	30
-----------------------------	----

CHAPTER IV.

A BIG BULLY,	42
------------------------	----

CHAPTER V.

GERMAN,	54
-------------------	----

CHAPTER VI.

MY HERO,	72
--------------------	----

CHAPTER VII.

LIZETTE'S PROTECTOR,	PAGE 89
--------------------------------	------------

CHAPTER VIII.

DREAMS,	96
-------------------	----

CHAPTER IX.

REALITY,	118
--------------------	-----

CHAPTER X.

COMPATRIOTS,	132
------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XI.

A SHATTERED CASTLE,	160
-------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XII.

THE SPECIAL ENGAGEMENT,	180
-----------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XIII.

THE GRAND HIPPODROME,	206
---------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XIV.

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT,	238
-------------------------------	-----

IN THE RING.

CHAPTER I.

CHARLES PETMAN'S
GRAND CIRCUS. THIS DAY.

LARGEST SHOW IN THE WORLD.

Patronised by all the Crowned Heads of Europe.

GRAND CIRCUS!

THE WORLD-RENOWNED COMPANY

Under the Direction of

MR CHARLES PETMAN,

On the White Hart Tavern Green, will give their first
performance in

GRIMSTON, at 8 precisely,

September 21st.

GRAND CIRCUS!

SUCH was the announcement in huge, highly-coloured letters of blue, red and green, on a ground of flaming yellow, which, for the last

three days, had dazzled the eyes, and raised on tiptoe the expectations of the inhabitants of a busy manufacturing town in the north of England. And true to their parti-coloured promises, made with so much *éclat* on every wall and fence in the town, the gorgeous show promised had streamed into the town with all banners flying—a somewhat discordant brass band playing—and the usual cavalcade of gilded cars, ornamented with gay pictures, on one of them a tall, fine-looking woman, dressed as Britannia, or rather, as one of the spectators persisted, “must give the lady her title, you know—Rule Britannia,” the usual troop of long-tailed, piebald ponies, some led, the rest ridden by knights and ladies in gorgeously bespangled dresses—most of them rather the worse for wear—behind these a clown seated—the reverse way—upon a lean-looking donkey, who, like his master, was completely enveloped in trappings of yellow, red, green, and blue, looking for all the world as if their suits were made of the odd and useless bills of the show; and behind the jester of the court, in solemn dignity, the mighty Petman himself drove, his portly person clad in the everlasting sealskin waistcoat, with ponderous watch-chain and seals, in a tiny trap, drawn by two matchless cream ponies.

Oh, such a splendid sight it was! How eagerly had all the little boys and girls looked forward to the first performance, which was to be given at eight o’clock precisely, in the gigantic

tent, erected in a large piece of waste land at the least-populated end of the town, and how great had been the excitement evinced as the longed-for hour arrived.

Now it is all over. For three nights only had the inhabitants of busy Grimston been allowed to gape in wonder at the wonderful jockey-rider, George Epsom ; at the marvellous feats of Signor Patchoulis, the greatsomersaultist ; Madame Petite, in her graceful and marvellous act, "The Poetry of Motion ;" the wonderful Breakneck Brothers, in their inimitable performance upon the horizontal bar ; the well-known Madame Fourteenstone on her bare backed steed ; the renowned Japanese children, in their marvellous juggling act ; the side-splitting clowns, Merry-go-Round and Little Jerry ; on lions, tigers, elephants, etc., on show, etc., etc. ; and almost before the last wondrous gaper has been induced to leave the hippodrome tent, with less ceremony, and certainly persuasion of a more forcible sort than the means used to induce him to enter the gay abode of wit and wonder, the work of demolition has commenced. In a few hours the gorgeous show will have completely disappeared ; the emblazoned tent, with its gaudily-dressed men and women, wonderful animals and mighty, will be a thing of the past ; the only evidence of its existence being a well-worn circle on the green, deeply rutted with wheel marks, trodden by the hoofs of the wonderful animals, and littered with signs of past revelry in the shape of broken gingerbeer bottles, innumerable scraps of

paper, bearing the name of the nearest pastry-cook, and the usual complement of orange-peel.

Already the inside of the tent is undergoing a complete revolution; the red-covered seats are being piled up with all speed into the large, rough waggons which are to transport them to Biddington, the next town which the great show is to honour; already the long-tailed ponies are stripped of their gay trappings, and loosely haltered together in trios and quartettes, ready for the start in the morning, while the knights and ladies, in nineteenth century costumes of rather questionable cut, are condescending to very ordinary actions, and certainly not very chivalric language, as they assist in the general work, or look vigilantly after their special belongings. George Epsom is violently rowing one of the grooms, who has the care of his racer, because, through negligence on his own part, that priceless animal had been carelessly saddled—a fact which accounted for its rider failing to go through his performance with his accustomed success Signor Patchouli, a fiery little Italian—for once answering to the nationality his name implied—was displaying his knowledge of our English (bad) language by swearing roundly at his “servant” for impeding the removal of his thoroughbreds, their master being in a great hurry to keep an appointment, made by means of a few telegraphic signs in the intervals of “double hand over handers” with a pretty girl in a velvet hat in the front row of the threepenny seats. Usually

“The Signor,” as he was called, did not deign to thus honour any but the sixpenny front seats—I beg their pardon, the stalls—but *la petite charmante* had answered his glances so encouragingly that he had been led to appoint a meeting at the nearest oyster shop, where two-shillings-a-dozen natives and stout would be the order of the day. In a further corner, Madame Petite, a faded, wrinkled old woman—now she was *sans* make-up—was having a few, but decided, words with Sam Merry-go-Round, because his tricks had interfered with her time allowed. Madame Fourteenstone was personally superintending the removal of her wardrobe, contained in the narrow space of a hat box; the Breakneck Brothers were going through a little performance not quite so inimitable as that in which they had lately engaged so successfully—namely, trying in a vague, undecided sort of manner to get out of the stage-door—a slit in the tent—a feat which they had some difficulty in accomplishing, for, as Jack remarked, after five unsuccessful trials, in which he severely damaged his noble features—“horizontal might be in his line, but blessed if he could make a go at the ‘parpendicklar.’” “Right you are, mate,” said his relative, sawing about in the air to try and reach something to hold on by; “it’s a clear case of ‘two to one, bar one,’ with us, I’m blowed if it ain’t;” while two very English mothers—at least, in their way of showing affection—were dragging away their sleepy offspring, in the shape of the

Japanese children. Several others of the company were lounging near; some had gone to their lodgings; two or three ladies and gentlemen, of better class than their fellow performers, were directing, as required by agreement, the removal of their stage properties; one or two girls, poorly dressed, waited patiently while the grooms dallied unnecessarily with their few professional belongings; some gentlemen-riders stood about in knots, talking of the late season and likely success of the next move; men rushed hither and thither, dragging, pushing, or carrying all sorts of odd-shaped bundles; and the sounds of calling and shouting of orders, knocking, etc., and all the noise usually attendant on the removal of so great a show, nearly deafened one.

A little apart, however, from this centre of the confusion and bustle were two persons, one a tall, fine-looking girl, evidently of better means than her companions, for her dress—a well-cut ulster of dark green cloth, a large felt hat turned up with a neat black wing and steel buckle, good black gauntlet-gloves, and neat linen collar of scrupulous whiteness—spoke of comfortable if not extravagant means, and suited well her fine figure and not unhandsome face, as she sat in the full glare of the lights from a long row of flaring gas-jets which was raised above the well-worn red velvet chair, the seat of honour for the leader of the orchestra, on the arm of which she was seated.

By her side, leaning in a careless but not ungraceful position against one of the slight wooden

pillars which supported the tent, was a young man of about two-and-twenty, dressed in a long, brown overcoat, open in the front, and showing him to be of a tall but slight build. He wore a crimson silk scarf twisted loosely round his neck, a gold ring on the little finger of his left hand, in which he held a pair of brown gloves, and a soft felt hat shading a pale, and certainly not an English face.

Presently a timid voice breaks in upon the *tête-à-tête*, above the noise of hammering, the hum of many talkers, and the clatter of many hurrying feet, as it asks,—

“Could you to tell me, please, where I may find Mr Petman?”

The young fellow breaks off in the middle of the answer he is making to some question put to him by his companion, turns in the direction of the voice, while at the same time the workmen nearest cease their clatter for a moment to turn also, and see what daring stranger has intruded in upon their sacred precincts, who it is who demands to enter the great manager's presence, and that after the conclusion of so weighty a piece of business as the evening performance. And what they see in the speaker is only a girl, of middle height and slight make, simply and poorly dressed in black, with a white face lit up by two big brown eyes, which she raises so timidly to meet the young fellow's look of cool surprise.

For an instant she bears the almost insolent glance, and then suddenly her head droops, and a

deep flush floods her pale cheeks a brief moment, for she suddenly finds herself the object of inspection from more than one pair of inquisitive eyes—the young lady in the ulster, impatient at the interruption to her *tête-à-tête*, not the least backward in her review; and even in that brief pause more than one not too-softly uttered comment falls upon the stranger's ears, so that, in spite of her effort to appear unconcerned, the colour in her face deepens perceptibly.

“Who the devil—beg pardon, Madame Petite—I know you object to bad language—doesn't she, Smith? but who in the name of all that's holy is asking for the gov'nor at this time night? Business hours, my lady, are from twelve till one, and you may think yourself lucky then you find the old man sober!”

“Who is this leetle girl?” asked Signor Patchouli who had seen his belongings at length safely bestowed in the van, and was drawing on his dirty lavender kids preparatory to starting for his appointed rendezvous. “Surely, it is not *mia signorina* tired of waiting and come to seek for me! *Tu veritá*, it is indiscreet.”

Mesdames. Fourteensone and Petite favoured the new comer with a cool stare, and then for once met on friendly terms in a few of those wondrous telegraphic signs in which women convey so much meaning to one another, while Jack Breakneck sidled up to his mortal enemy, George Epsom, and throwing his arm affectionately round that renowned equestrian's bull neck,

struck an attitude expressive of great tragic import, and whispered with an air of profound secrecy to the assembled company :

"My friends, it's a case of 'Father, dear father, come home.' Now then, George, don't look so furious. We all know the old proverb—'Put a beggar on horseback and he'll ride to the devil!'"

"—— you. There's no occasion to saddle even an ass to pay that visit. Your address is always within walking distance."

A loud laugh greeted this coarse retort, which was hushed by a sharp,—

"Now then, you fellows, drop that and get on with the work, unless you want to save the expense of a night's lodgings. Not a man Jack of you leaves this place till it's all packed ready for the morning. So you best look sharp!"

It was the young fellow to whom the stranger had addressed herself who spoke, and as the men seemed to know of old that his orders, though given generally in a more polite manner than Mr Petman's, had to be obeyed, turned once more to their tasks, and he to the little figure at his side, with an impatient motion of his head, as if her question had been but half heard.

The girl timidly repeated it, this time in a lower voice,—

"Can you to tell me where I am likely to find the manager?"

The words were accompanied by a slight raise of the shoulders, and were spoken with an em-

phasis and accent which at once proclaimed the speaker to be a foreigner.

This fact might have inclined the listener to have been somewhat more gracious in his manner than he was, for he himself was a foreigner, had he known it of the same nationality as his questioner; had once been a stranger in a foreign land, without a home or friend, and it was purely by his own exertions that he had risen to what he was; but he was engaged with the lady at his side, and had no time to spare for any little attention to any one else, so he only said, with a second cool stare,—

“Mr Petman has left for to-night, and”—with a gesture of the hand as if in token of dismissal—“business hours are from twelve till one in the morning.”

“Yes, I know,” said the girl, blushing again at the reproof, “but I could not get here before.”

(“Did she think,” whispered Jack Breakneck to his brother, as a loud aside, “that the old gentleman was going to wait her coming?”)

“And,” went on the stranger, “I thought perhaps he might—I mean do you to think he would—of course I know it is not to be the proper time, but —” and the girl, after stammering in a very confused fashion, ended by blushing nervously, and leaving her sentence unfinished.

A smile of great amusement, which she did not attempt to hide, crossed the face of the girl in the ulster, and she looked up at her companion with a flash of mischief in her bright, black eyes; the

brown ones returned the look with great disingenuousness, and the young German asked, with a careless shrug of his shoulders, "Well?"

The tone, almost insolent in its inquiry, and the glance which accompanied it, seemed to restore the person to whom it was addressed to her self-possession. Her eyes flashed suddenly with a greater fire even than those of the girl in the ulster herself; she drew herself up with a quiet air of dignity, and with a look of resolution as if determined to know what she wanted to know, and be nervous no longer, she said quickly,—

"I beg your pardon for to put you to the trouble, but I have want to see Mr Petman on a little business. I meant to have come sooner, but have been delayed. Do you think he will to see me, and if so, will you be so good as to tell me where I can find him?"

"I am afraid," began the young man, on whom the sudden alteration of his questioner's manner was not without effect, for he gave up his lounging position and spoke less carelessly: "I am afraid Mr Petman will not be able to see you this evening, for—"

"I am sure he will not," broke in the young lady, with an air of decision. "It is is far too late. Why" (consulting her watch), "it is nearly eleven o'clock. I expect he has had his supper and gone to bed at least half-an-hour ago."

At these words the strange girl's face fell once more.

"Then, of course, I'm behind the time. Oh, I

am sorry. My business is very important—at least to me it is. But to-morrow, if I come here at half-past twelve—”

“You will to a certainty find us all vanished.”

The girl looked mystified.

“I mean that this is our last night in Grimston. We start at six to-morrow for Thurley.”

“Then if I come at half-past five?”

“You may find Mr Petman here, and you may not. I cannot answer for his movements.”

“Could you to take a message to him for me?” asked the girl. “I would like to see him if I could do it; but perhaps a message would do it as well.”

“I’m afraid,” interrupted the girl in the ulster, rising suddenly from her seat and turning away, “it is of no use. Mr Petman only receives personal applications. You had better come to-morrow morning if you want to see him, and take your chance whether you do or not.”

The girl flushed uncomfortably under the indifferent tone—seemed for a moment as if she would say something in answer to this rather haughty speech, then paused, and half turned to the young German with a look of inquiry, as if asking his advice in the matter, but his attention was just then attracted by the clumsy way in which one of the workmen was dragging along some packages; he bade him be careful what he was about, and then, seeing his late questioner had not moved from where she stood, he asked, as he turned to follow his companion,—

“Is that all you wished to know?”

The girl started from the reverie into which she had apparently fallen, and answered with a nervous bend of her head, "Yes, I thank you, that is all."

Then as the young man, without another word, hastily went to rejoin his companion, who was evidently waiting for him to renew the interrupted *tête-à-tête*, eventually to escort her to her father's lodgings, the girl yet made no movement to go, but stood, a little black-robed, passive figure, in the midst of the busy preparations for departure going on around her.

It was a lively scene this, and a gay one, too, for there was plenty of fun and laughter mixed with the workers. The tour so far had been a very successful one—the three performances in Grimston among the best, both from a financial and appreciative point of view—the last one exceptionally so. Mr Petman had every reason to be satisfied with his receipts, as he called them; and the performers had in turn been so enthusiastically received and applauded that each and all for a wonder had very little to complain of; everyone was in a good temper, and loud roars of laughter mingled with the sounds of bustle and noise.

Only this strange girl stood alone, looking somehow rather out of place in that noisy crowd.

It is true she was poorly, even shabbily dressed—her clothes, travel-stained and worn, as though she had made a long journey on foot. Her boots were covered with dust, and were well-worn, but there was an air of quiet gentility about her in

spite of the plain dress, jacket, and poor bonnet, which bespoke the wearer a lady in spite of her poverty.

Yes, poor she certainly was—poor ; and, to judge by her manner, perhaps totally friendless in that busy city.

She had no doubt come a long distance to see this mighty magnate, Charles Petman, who at that very moment was enjoying a comfortable forty winks in his lodgings while waiting for his daughter's appearance to join him in the nice little oyster supper which, in honour of her arrival, he had ordered to be sent in from the cook-shop next door, a nap which it would have done him no earthly harm to have dispensed with while he ascertained the business of the young lady who had so earnestly desired to see him.

But of course the young lady did not know this, and she looked weary and sad as she remained where the young German had left her.

Yes, she evidently was very hopeless and very disappointed at the ill-success of her mission, and her attitude, as she stood under the glare of the gas-light, was expressive of both, the flaming jets showing a slight, girlish figure in the poor, scanty black dress and neat black jacket, a band of *crêpe* round the left arm telling of some late loss, and the small, almost childish, face turned slightly away from the glare—a face with small regular features—as pale as marble now that the angry flush of a few moments before had died away—a sensitively-lined mouth, a low, clear

forehead, upon which a few loose curls of soft brown hair stole from the company of many sisters tucked up under the brim of the round silk hat, a face which had once been very pretty in a simple sort of way before poverty and care had stolen the colour from the thin cheeks and shaded those dark circles beneath those brown eyes, in which a look of patient suffering had shut out all the fire and fun, eyes of soft deep hazel, pretty gentle eyes, so gentle and trusting in expression, so sweetly confiding when the long dark lashes were raised with that shy, nervous movement, and the owner was startled from her self-possession for a moment.

Yes, a pretty face it had been once, and was so still, only so pale and thin, and oh! so strangely pitiful to look upon, with that look of patient weariness imprinted on it, as if this girl was used to battling with the world, to meeting with rebuffs and rough words, when kind ones would have cost so little, and been worth so much.

For several moments after the young German had left her the girl stood thus, then suddenly once more roused herself from the dream into which she had fallen, for some of the workmen were calling loudly to her to get out of their way as they moved some of the lumber near them.

"By your leave, miss! by your leave. Out of the way there!"

The girl started, and endeavoured to do as desired, but, confused by the noise and the glare, only succeeding in running into further trouble.

To escape from a huge truck piled with seats she nearly overturned a pile of band instruments, and to avoid these ran into two lads carrying the stand of whips, tambourines, tubs, hoops, and chairs used in the performance of the wonderful French poodles introduced by Madame Terrili, and nearly upset both burden and bearers.

At this she turned, and, crossing the tent, quickly disappeared through the opening which served as a door. But on the threshold she paused; the bright light within dazzled her and made the darkness without all the more intense.

CHAPTER II.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

IT was a dreary wet night. The sky, what was visible of it over the many house-tops and chimneys of the town, was a mass of threatening clouds. Not a star or moonbeam penetrated the thick canopy to relieve the gloom and utter cheerlessness. Added to this it was raining, not heavily, but with a steady persistent downpour which gave little promise of its clearing up for that night. It was cold, too. A keen easterly wind was blowing, and as it searched about in nooks and corners, it whistled and snarled like an angry watch-dog. But in spite of the roughness of the weather, the circus had been the cause of so much excitement in the town, that even after the large gathering which had formed the audience for the last night had dispersed, a small crowd of idlers yet lingered around the precincts of the wondrous show, as though loath to leave its mysteries so soon, for when the morning came they would look for them in vain.

Thus it happened that in among the cars and various vehicles employed in the transportation of the "show" from place to place, more than one group of idlers was to be seen; while now and then dark figures passed to and fro like fleeting shadows as some busy worker sped on some errand. These first the lateness of the hour rendered by no means the most orderly or respectable, and the sounds of their noisy revelry mingled with the noise of the workmen busy around them. The stranger girl on the threshold of the tent looked hesitatingly round her, for her way to the road beyond lay right past one or two of these knots of idlers. After a moment, drawing her cloak closer round her, for she had no other protection against the rain, she set out on her passage.

She found this even more difficult than she imagined, for the ground, deeply indented by the cart-wheels and the prints of many feet, was literally one big pool of water, and so slippery that she was more than once in danger of losing her footing. As it was, she had to plod along at a very slow pace, which threatened to make her journey of some duration, while already the rain was pouring off the black hat in a way which must have anything but added to the comfort of the wearer, but still she trudged on. These, however, were not the only difficulties with which she had to contend; her presence alone in such a place at such an hour did not escape remark from some of the

noisy idlers, and more than once, as she passed a laughing, loud-voiced group, the remarks—some not intended for her ears ; others coarse witticisms addressed to her—caused her to hasten her steps as well as she was able.

No one, however, went so far as to molest her until she was some distance from the tent.

She was just, with some precipitation, making good her escape from a trio of loafers who were making the place ring with a very powerful rendering of the latest comic song, when she saw before her another group of the same company, noisier and more boisterous in their conduct than any she had yet encountered. They were about a dozen in number this time, and, so far as the girl could tell, had evidently paid more than one visit to the "White Hart Tavern" opposite, for they were behaving more like bears than men, and indulging in such horse-play as made it doubtful whether they would part such good friends as they appeared to be.

They were, as they protested—rather more loudly than the occasion seemed to require—waiting for the shower to give over and the sun to shine, and had sought a temporary shelter in a low shed which was erected on one side of the field. To gain the road beyond, unless she retraced her steps and made a long *détour* round the circus tent, she must pass right close to them, as a wall made the path into a narrow passage.

The prospect was anything but tempting, and

the solitary female traveller in those cheerless regions came to an involuntary stop when she saw what lay before her. It seemed to her that she would never be able to make her way out of the precincts of the circus, for to go alone, as she was, down that narrow passage, among all those men, seemed impossible.

No, she dared not attempt it, after the example she had already had of the sort of company which was abroad; she dared not run into the danger which till now she had succeeded in escaping. But then, what was the alternative?

The girl for two or three moments was uncertain what to do. To go on was to her to face what she, of all people, most dreaded—a crowd, and that of half-intoxicated men, who might be tempted by her loneliness to assail her; but to go back!

She turned and glanced at the rough way which in the darkness lay before her. It seemed so far to the light on the other side, whereas, beyond the shed, not many yards before her, the glare of the “White Hart Tavern” told that the road she wished to follow was not far distant.

One glance backward, and then the girl set off determinedly towards the shed.

The ground here was even in a worse condition than elsewhere, but at length, after much difficulty, she stood within a yard of the shed, then paused once more, for a sudden roar of coarse laughter rose into the night. Some joke or trick of one of their companions was evidently amusing the men mightily.

The girl judged that if she wished to pass unnoticed she had better do so while their attention was engaged, so, with as much speed as was possible, she made for the passage, entered it, keeping as near to the wall as possible, hoping to be protected by its shadow.

The path was broken, but not heeding how she stepped, she almost bounded along, reached the shed, passed it in safety, unperceived, and then, just as she thought all danger past, suddenly lost her footing on the slippery ground, and in her fear uttered a cry of terror.

The men turned, and in an instant two of their number darted forward.

"By ——!" said one, "here's a lady—a real lady—out on a night like this!"

"Real lady," said the other; "'tain't no lady, it's a drowned rat."

At this witty (?) sally the rest of the men turned out, and before the girl, who had only slipped on to her knees, and was more frightened than hurt, could do anything but gain her feet once more, she was accosted by half-a-dozen of the loafers with an undisguised familiarity which, added to the coarse language, tended greatly to increase her trepidation.

Without, however, taking any notice of their remarks, she turned to make good her retreat, but this was prevented. One of the men, scarcely able to so much as stand straight, barred the way.

"What's yer hurry, miss? Can't yer stop a

bit? A party aint complete without no ladies. Do join us."

The girl endeavoured to push by him, but he held out his arms and reeled towards her, gave a sudden bound, and caught her savagely by the wrist, swearing horribly, and drawing from her a cry of fear and pain, for his grip was like iron and hurt her.

There was no need for more than one cry, for help was nearer than she dared to hope, and before the call had left her lips, the hand which held her was struck down, and her tormentor pushed roughly on one side. He staggered back against the wall, and for a moment, in the excitement, she could not find out who had come to her rescue.

"Now then, you fellows," said a clear ringing voice, "what are you up to?"

"What's that to do with you?" asked the girl's tormentor, making an attempt to square his shoulders and show fight. "Can't a decent and respectable man speak to a girl without being interfered with?"

"Certainly he can," said the new comer, a young man in a loose overcoat, the collar turned up to his ears, and his hat on the back of his head. "Certainly he can, but that isn't to say *you* may."

At this bold rejoinder the rest of the men, who had gathered round with anything but peaceful looks, ceased their threatening gestures, and gave a hearty roar at their comrade's expense.

He, however, did not take the retort so good-naturedly, and began swearing roundly that "he'd be —— if he wouldn't smash any man to bits who told him he wasn't respectable."

"Come on and try," said the object of his wrath, stepping forward, and coolly putting his hands in his pockets, much to the delight of the men, who saw some fun in store.

Nor were they disappointed. The drunken man, after making a deal of show, drew himself up and aimed a blow, it seemed, straight at his antagonist, who stepped nimbly on one side, and the blow meeting only the air, the aimer was sent sprawling on his face in the mud and slime. This course of action did not meet with approval on all sides, but before the men could do anything but begin to swear loudly, the young fellow turned to where the girl, to whose aid he had come, stood, half dazed by what had occurred, and taking her firmly but not roughly by the arm, hurried her down the path and out into the light. Then he let go his hold, and, as the girl did not speak—she was, in fact, trembling too much to say a word—drew back a step to let the light fall upon her, no doubt curious to see what sort of person it was he had rescued.

The girl was in a pitiable plight indeed: the short walk in the rain had literally drenched her from head to foot; her clothes were hanging in soaking folds, and her slip by the shed had further disfigured her dress by a large patch of green mud.

A truly deplorable figure, and certainly not one

to inspire respect; but, perhaps, it was that this rough-looking fellow was possessed of a kinder heart than his not very prepossessing exterior betokened; perhaps he saw that, despite the shabby dress and cloak, there was an air of quiet gentility in the way they were worn, which told that poverty was the only cause of their poorness; perhaps he was one of those who do not judge always by outward appearance, who can tell a lady from one undeserving of the title, but when he spoke at length it was respectfully, as though to a superior.

"I must beg your pardon, miss, for hurrying you along so, but I was afraid lest those men should get any hotter. Can see they're not the best company out to-night. I hope they haven't hurt you."

"Thank you, no, I have no hurt; but I was so frightened, and if you had not have come just then, I do not know what should have happened for me," and the girl raised a very, very white face, in which a look of fear was gradually giving place to one of utter weariness. The young man, touched to the bottom of his honest heart by her lonely friendlessness, said kindly,—

"I'm very glad I happened to be going by, miss; it's a nasty night for any one to be crossing the field—a real nasty night."

They were only a few words of kindness, rough enough in themselves, but uttered in well-meant sympathy, such as to the tired, unnerved listener were of far more worth because of the rudeness

and rebuffs she had so lately met with, and though she turned her head away quickly, it was not before the glare of the gaslight showed the unbidden tears which had risen to the big brown eyes, while a queer little gasp for breath told the rest.

At the sound of that half-smothered sob, with its tale of weariness and lost hope, the young man involuntarily went a step nearer, a surprised inquiry on his lips but not uttered, for somehow something seemed to forbid him to even unwittingly insult this girl by so much as an offer of pity.

He coughed rather loudly, and stared for a moment in silence at one of the placards of the circus posted up against the tavern, and by this time the girl had struggled to regain her composure.

"Thank you," she said, in a voice which would sound shaky in spite of her efforts to steady it. "Thank you for being kind as you did. It was very good of you."

"Please don't mention it, miss. I was only too glad to be of use. There are too many of those sort of men about to-night, and this rain's not likely to give over yet." He hesitated, then added very diffidently, he was so afraid of being too bold, "Have you far to go, miss? Excuse my asking, but—" Again he paused awkwardly, not knowing how to express his reason, so began buttoning up his coat rather nervously instead.

The girl, however, did not seem to note the lameness of his remark, and asked hastily if he could tell her the way to Dalton Lane.

"I'm very sorry, miss, but I'm a stranger here—

leastways, only came a few days since, but I will find out for you," and he turned to do so, but the girl said wearily,—

"Oh, do not so trouble to do that. I will be able to find it in time. I know part of the journey to Lawson Road. I can inquire the rest."

Not a very cheerful prospect on such a night, but the girl seemed to be too hopeless to fight against fate.

"To Lawson Road?" said her questioner. "Why, that's nearly a mile from here; you're going beyond that!" And his surprise found vent in a whistle, of which the next instant he was heartily ashamed, apologising most humbly. "It's a trick of mine, miss," he said, "and I forget myself sometimes in private."

The force of this remark was not quite clear, but the girl once more drew her cloak round her, thanked him for coming to her assistance, and turned away.

He went a step after her and asked, rather surprised at his own boldness, "You're not going all that way alone, are you, miss? Lawson Road is a nasty place, and the company won't be any of the best at this time of night."

"I know, but I must to go, and alone, for I have no friends here," was the admission.

"No friends?" This young man knew well what it was to be alone and friendless in a big city, and almost involuntarily he blurted out,—

"It isn't fit for any lady to go through the town

alone at this time ; it isn't fit. I wish you'd let me help you, miss—don't think I'm meaning to insult you, or thinking of any harm—I wouldn't for the world, but I wish you'd let me help you."

At his first words the girl had shrunk back a little, but bold as his offer might have seemed, she was a stranger in a strange land, and there was no mistaking the earnestness—the honesty of the proffered assistance. She raised her head, and this time the tears slowly welled out of their cradles and rolled down the pale cheeks as she replied quietly, "Thank you ; you are very kind, but I could not let you come. I must to go alone. I am used to it, and all the men cannot be as bad as those just now," but she shivered nervously as she spoke, and the tears fell faster.

"There's no knowing," said the young man eagerly. "I know it isn't to be expected a young lady like you 'd like to walk along with me, a perfect stranger, but you'd needn't do that. Let me see you safe there where you want to go, and I'll keep as far behind you as you like ; but nobody as is in trouble seems to be a stranger to me, and you're one of us, you say," excusing himself for his rather free offer.

He spoke so earnestly that it seemed hard to doubt his sincerity, but the girl shook her head. "No, no," she said, half fearfully. "Please let me go alone." Then, as if ashamed of her ingratitude, she held out her hand impulsively—a small white hand only half covered by a coarse woollen mitten—and said, in her pretty broken English

tones, "Good-bye; thank you so very much. You are so good for me."

The next moment she had disappeared, leaving only the touch of her cold, damp fingers upon her would-be friend's rough palm.

He stood for a little peering through the darkness in which she had disappeared, with the light of the lamp above his head gleaming down and making it no difficult task for a pair of brown eyes wet with tears to take a backward look that if ever this new friend and their owner met again he might be recognised.

What the gaslight showed was not a very gilded picture of the rescuer of a hapless maiden. The hero was certainly anything but a fine specimen of his class. So far as outward appearances went he was the very reverse—in fact, if not actually unprepossessing, not in the least attractive-looking. He was of about two-and-twenty years of age, with a ruddy, clean-shaven face, not by any means handsome, with its rough, irregular features, small grey-green eyes, set far back in his head, large mouth, and short straight-cropped hair, of a sandy colour, which gave a comical look of surprise to his face by perversely sticking up on his low forehead like a tuft, in spite of the evident application of a large quantity of pomade.

And yet not an unpleasant face after all, in spite of its defects, for there was a look of good temper and honest frankness about the grey-green eyes; and a good-natured merry smile round the large mouth made one forget its plainness.

And, too, in spite of the rather common cut about him, a certain air of jauntiness in the tilt of the round brown hat, the bow of his tie, and the general set of his light pepper-and-salt suit and thick rough overcoat, a bearing which was certainly not affected—the wearer was evidently less of a cockney than he appeared—but all the same certainly very common-place looking, and, as I said, by no means anything like a hero. But what did outward appearances matter—those two brown eyes knew full well that a kinder heart beat under the queerly-fitting jacket than she had found beneath a more aristocratically cut one; and somehow, although it rained even harder than ever, and the well-worn cloak was clinging closer with its damp folds, the world did not seem quite as cheerless as before, just because some one had taken the trouble to speak a few kind words to a poor, friendless girl, a stranger in the country, and to care whether she was safe amidst the dangers of a big city.

It was not much to do, perhaps, but that little German girl, as she hurried on her way, looked back more than once and wondered if she and her would-be friend would ever meet again.

CHAPTER III.

FRIENDS AND FOES.

THEY did meet again, and that far sooner than either of them could have guessed.

Once more it is evening, and we are in the huge ring-tent where we first made the acquaintance of Mr Petman's world-famed circus, but this time the busy preparations which are going on are for the first of the performances in this—the large market town where the equestrian company have (literally) pitched their tents.

Again everything is hurry and bustle, for Thurley is one of the most important stopping-places on the route. A large and more than usually high-class audience is expected. The coming of the circus is looked upon quite as a national event. The lower orders are sure to flock in in large numbers. The gentry are by no means above its attractions, while more than once a mayor of the town, with a great predilection for equestrian exercise of any kind, condescended to honour the show with his presence. After this the entertainment was considered as quite genteel

and proper. Indeed, it was considered *the* thing to have visited it, and its wonders were food for conversation long after its tents had removed to other regions.

And this is the first night.

The procession, more than usually gorgeous on account of the importance of the occasion, had streamed into the town at mid-day, just when the town folk were on the way to or from dinner, had paraded its splendours along all the principal streets, and with much show of secrecy settled down under the canvas roofs prepared for their reception, and around which during the whole day the usual crowd of curious idlers was not long in gathering.

Now, however, the night was come; in about an hour the performance would commence.

And now occurred a most unlooked-for catastrophe; just as Mr Petman was in the act of giving some final directions preparatory to retiring to his lodgings, for dinner and the usual "forty winks" which preceded his exertions of the coming evening, the news was brought to him that Madame Petite, owing to a severe cold, which had the effect of rendering her prostrate, was unable to appear in the prospective performance.

This announcement did not meet with the sympathy which one would have imagined it deserved, and accompanying his inquiry with one of his most choice expressions, the manager asked how long the lady had been subject to the influenza.

A knowing wink and a motion of the hand of

one drinking was the answer, one which had the effect of rousing Mr Petman's anger to such a pitch that he grew positively crimson in the face, and vented his rage in such a choleric way that any one who did not understand his "way" of venting his feelings when roused must have feared a fit. He raged and fumed, stamped and swore, like one bewitched, in such a manner that the whole of his company, who ordinarily stood in awe of him, grew so terrified that they became perfectly helpless, petrified under the torrent of his wrath. They stood about in knots, incurring his displeasure one moment by their laziness, the next angrily bidden leave the work alone if they could not do it in a more business-like way.

Until then matters had been rather calmer than usual, owing to a more than ordinarily prosperous tour, so far so that the storm which now broke was doubly fierce in its intensity.

For some time Mr Petman had no occasion to exercise his powers of abusing, so at this the first opportunity his concentrated force was doubly powerful.

Poor Madame Petite! If the blessings which he pronounced upon her head could in any way have affected her, she would have had a most exhilarating time of it, while the earnest way in which he consigned her to a warmer climate than our own was certainly worthy of a better cause.

"Severe cold! He'd severe cold her if she got up to her tricks again. This was the third time during the tour that she had been rendered in-

capable of appearing through indisposition. What business had she or any other member of the company to be indisposed, especially on such an occasion as the present? What would the performance be with only one fancy rider, and that infernally fat Madame Forette? (Fourteenstone, as the fellows called her, who was so bold in appearance and nervous in her riding that she rarely got so much as a call.) A nice specimen of a fancy rider to present to the mayor and his honourable company! Why the —— couldn't Madame Petite have held out a little longer? She wasn't nearly so much to look at as her rival, but she could ride a little."

Here the worthy manager sent forth another shower of expletives upon the unfortunate artiste's head with such a gusto that even Will Breakneck opened his eyes and expressed his devout surprise in a subdued whistle. "By ——!" he said to Jack, who was busy putting some new wire to one of his trapezes, a task which he would trust to no one but himself, "the guv'nor's fairly off now. We shall have a time of it to-night. Why, he beats the missus even with some of his blessings, and she was a hot 'un."

For fully twenty minutes the renowned Petman continued to give vent to his feelings, and at the end of that time became endued with a violent desire to have vengeance on the offending Petite.

"I'll pay her out for this. If she thinks she joined this company to have colds when she chooses, she's mistaken. I'm not going to stand

her nonsense any longer. Rheumatics! She's no more subject to rheumatics than I am. It's laziness, that's what it is. I'll teach her to show her temper to me. She knows her worth,—that I can't afford to turn her off while I have got no one to fill her place; but by ——, if only I get a chance, I'll let her see what I'm made of."

"Is there no one you can get?" asked the ring-master, who had been quietly listening to this tirade.

"At this short notice! Not likely. I don't know a soul, —— it. I'll let the show go to the deuce. It's not a bit of use trying to square things."

And, as a relief to his mind, the worthy manager swore roundly at every one within hailing distance, fired a double-barrelled oath at the absent Madame Petite as a parting shot, and went off to his lodgings, swearing and fuming still.

When, however, he returned at the hour for the performance—just as the excited audience was beginning to pour into the tent, he had somewhat recovered his equanimity, and, rather to the surprise of the grooms, gave orders that Madame Petite's charger should be ready at the usual time.

"What's the guv'nor up to?" said the official appointed to perform this office.

"Perhaps he sent the old woman a tonic to give her strength to keep her place."

The guv'nor, however, vouchsafed no explanation to any save the ring-master, whom he informed that quite by chance he had found waiting

to see him at his lodgings a fancy rider, as he called her, who was seeking an engagement. She was well recommended by Monsieur Folet, of the Cirque Royale, Marseilles, so to pay Madame Petite out, he (the manager) had offered to give her a chance for a very small consideration, owing to there having been no trial, an omission which was certainly not any fault of the young artiste.

"It isn't my regular way, but it'll let madame see that I'm not going to stand her airs and graces any longer."

"But how about the Emperor? Will she ride him?"

"Didn't make the slightest doubt of it in the world. Says she's used to strange horses—never had one of her own; so if she likes to chance it, it's her own risk. Besides, any one could ride the Emperor if he's in the right mood. He's a bit skittish at times, but the girl needn't know, and it's her own look out if she can't stick on. Now, then, you boys, hurry up; there's no time to lose. We must be up to time to-night. Herman, wake up a bit, and see that those men look a bit presentable this evening. No larks to-night, mind. If anything goes wrong, — me if some one sha'n't pay for it."

The worthy manager, his portly form clad in an irreproachable dress suit, with a new pair of white gloves greatly adding to the dignity of his appearance, received his lordship the mayor (whom many of the inhabitants of the town remembered when barber's assistant not many years before),

and with much ceremony conducted his lordship to the seat of honour prepared for him. The house was crowded from floor to ceiling, and the treasury promised a goodly harvest.

The programme was a more than ordinarily good one—the band augmented by as many instrumentalists as were procurable—the artistes, as Mr Petman impressively designated them, in right trim, and everything went, as the manager mentally described it, swimmingly. Before half the performance was over the mayor had complimented him on the cleverness of his troupe, while the artistes themselves recognised in him one of the right sort, through his very lively appreciation of their several performances.

Each and all endeavoured to outshine the other, and the gracious way in which they acknowledged the applause, as though emanating entirely from the great man alone, was truly amusing. Rarely before had the company's efforts been so successful. Not so much as the slightest hitch marred the performance, and Mr Petman was counting upon a good notice in the *Thurley Advertiser*, when the name of Madame Petite rather upset his calculations.

This girl that he had employed in her place—how would she get on? Supposing she was a new hand, and made a "mull" of the job, it would spoil the whole affair. She had asked for hoops, banners, and balloons, and spoken of a skipping rope, which latter promised something new; but would she be able to carry out her performance

on an entirely strange horse, with by no means the best reputation for good temper?

It was doubtful. Best do without the second fancy rider after all than run the risk of an accident,—put the girl off somehow, rather than spoil the prospective notice.

The manager was about to carry out his plan,—on the point of despatching some one to ascertain whether the young performer had arrived, when he received a message from the mayor, desiring him to join the honourable party in partaking of the light refreshment which had been provided.

This little attention was not to be despised, and intending to see to the matter later on, Mr Petman hastened to obey the royal mandate.

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It was a few minutes before the re-commencement of the performance, after the interval between the first and second portions of the performance.

Mr Petman was still enjoying the honour of a prolonged interview with the mayor—an interview, in fact, in which his lordship proved himself so affable and jovial that our worthy manager was detained at his side much longer than he had originally intended.

Thus, while one or two of the grooms were busy in the sort of stable and greenroom all in one which adjoined the ring, getting ready Signor Patchouli's five thoroughbreds, whose docility and grace were in a short time to delight the audience, they were surprised by the entrance at a door

leading from the dressing-rooms of a young lady, evidently dressed for the performance, for there were flowers in her hair, and her feet shod in dainty white satin slippers. For the rest, a long thick cloak covered her from shoulders to ankles.

When she entered, it was with rather an hesitating step, and with a glance of timid inquiry.

This meeting with nothing but a not too polite stare in return, she drew her cloak more closely round her, and seating herself quietly on an empty trunk which stood near, appeared to wait, as though expecting some one.

A few moments later Signor Patchouli, the fat, red-faced Italian, with an extraordinary fondness for chewing tobacco, entered the tent, dressed in a well-worn evening suit, white gloves, and carrying the usual short and long whips. He always personally superintended the trapping of his steeds, and if any one of them was likely to prove "obstreperous," as the groom said, his master took pretty good care he left them out of the performance. The first thing on his entry, as usual chewing his favourite quid, was to elicit from the grooms their opinion of his appearance, and it was very funny to listen to the men's remarks, and see how every moment the trainer grew more and more puffed up with his pride.

It was a well-known fact that the signor considered himself the handsomest man in Europe, and the pride he took in his personal appearance was the cause of much amusement among his fellows, who never ceased to find fun in

flattering his vanity by the most extravagant compliments. To-day he had got himself up with extra care, and sorely lamented the fact of the mayor being a bachelor; had it been otherwise, there would have been a chance of his (the signor's) being summoned also to his lordship's, or rather, had such a person existed, her ladyship's presence.

It was most amusing to hear this old, self-imagined beau, with his dyed hair, false teeth, pencilled eyebrows, and painted and berouged cheeks fishing for compliments like the silliest schoolgirl, simpering and smiling at the slightest piece of flattery, and yet seeming to think nothing of the admirable training of his thoroughbreds, a fact which did him far more credit than his unceasing efforts to improve his personal appearance.

Well, as I have said—indeed, as the men declared with many gestures of wonderment, in imitation of his own gesticulations—the signor, on the night of which I write, was looking more than usually splendid; indeed their expressive looks, nods, and winks had the effect of rendering the absurd little man quite jovial.

He was in the midst of detailing, to the amusement of his listeners, how a princess of his own country had, unknown to him, painted his portrait and hung it up in her boudoir, when George Epsom the renowned jockey-rider, entered the tent.

He was a tall, muscular-looking fellow, with a figure which told of unusual strength, and a face which would not have been unhandsome had it

not been spoilt by an expression of cunning, which at times deepened into one of singular hardness and brutality. Nor did his looks belie his character.

He was one of those men who do not seem to have a soft corner anywhere in their natures. He had scarcely a real friend in the company;—was too much feared to be liked. He had a most sullen, revengeful temper, beat even the manager himself in the force of some of his expressions, drank as hard as he rode, and certainly had not the very best reputation among his companions. But his tall, yet muscular figure, in the white buckskins, top-boots, green Garibaldi and cap, was a not unattractive feature in the show. As a rule, he was shunned so far as was dared—with one exception.

He and Madame Petite were fast friends. The actual nature of their relationship was unknown. Popular opinion averred that the big, unscrupulous “bully,” as he was secretly called, had in some way managed to fascinate the weak-minded little woman, much in the same way as the oft-quoted serpent fascinates its prey; though even by the aid of that certainly not flattering comparison, the relations were difficult to understand, for of all natures least likely to attract, George Epsom’s was the one.

It was agreed that he must have some hold over the foolish woman, but what this could be it was difficult to determine, for she at once feared and doted on him with an intensity which was perfectly incomprehensible — blind to his faults,

bearing his moods with the utmost patience, worthy of a better cause, in every way his obedient slave—while he completely baffled all surmises by his manner in return, alternating between absolute indifference and, more often, almost brutal harshness, which was balanced by the energy with which he looked after her interests. These he seemed to put even before his own, fighting even the manager himself on her behalf. Owing to his efforts, her “screw” was always paid as promptly as his own, yet so poorly did the little woman live that it was generally believed she must have saved a tidy sum, unless, as was more likely to be the case, she was in reality the not too good natured jockey’s slave, and handed him all her earnings. This was more than likely, for Epsom beat any of the company by the ease, and even luxury, in which he lived, a style far beyond his apparent means ; but if such was truly the case, no one dared question him ; indeed, if Madame Petite was content, and such she certainly was to all appearances, what reason was there for outsiders to interfere ?

To return to the point of my story, from which this digression has led me.

CHAPTER IV.

A BIG BULLY.

ON the jockey's entrance into the tent, the signor drew somewhat on one side, and continued his anecdote concerning the princess in a lower voice, apparently by no means anxious to call forth any remark from the new comer, while Smith, one of the stable men, began hastily to saddle the "world-renowned racer, Daredevil," as though it did not need a looking-glass to remind him of the very black eye which disfigured his already not too handsome features—the reward for his carelessness of a few nights before—an attention on his master's part, the marks of which would not soon be obliterated.

The jockey, however, did not deign him so much as a glance; he sauntered, with his accustomed swagger, through the ante-room, as, by courtesy, it was called, and spent some time surveying the audience, who were just returning to their seats after the "ten minutes allowed for refreshments."

This done, he inspected the programme, and

finding that the third place in the list of performers was that appointed for his friend the little Frenchwoman—he himself occupied the first, followed in the second by the wonderful performance of the Anglo-Japanese children on the tight-wire—he looked round expecting to find her, but of course failed to do so.

It was the rule for every *artiste* to put in an appearance in the ante-room during the performance before his own, a rule which, considering the very incomplete accommodation, was a source of great discomfort to all concerned, but was enforced by Mr Petman to ensure against the ring being kept waiting.

Madame Petite, however, did not object to it so much, especially when the jockey act preceded her own, in which case she was sure to make her appearance in time to witness her strange lover's feats—day after day seeming to experience the same delight and gratification at his triumph—while, if on his appearance he deigned to favour her with a nod or a word, the colour would flush into her berouged and wrinkled cheeks, and she would go through her performance with a spirit and vigour truly surprising in one so old.

It appeared strange, no doubt, therefore, to Epsom that on so grand an occasion as that of which I write that she would have delayed her appearance.

Doubtless she was engaged in paying a little extra attention to her toilet, and would arrive in a few moments in all the splendour of faded satin,

limp muslin, and well-worn artificial flowers, the latter skilfully disposed amid her dyed yellow locks.

Epsom lounged near the door. He felt in a particularly agreeable mood. Mr Petman's agreement with most of his crack (?) riders was so much per cent. on the profits—it was safest on tour—and, if appearances were not deceitful, the crowded house promised a good haul all round.

Under these circumstances, for double reasons it might have been, the jockey felt somewhat more inclined than usual to exert himself to be amiable to his lady friend. He, as I said, awaited her coming at the door, and after a little deliberation, in which the exact amount of £ s. d. was calculated, deciding to bestow a little extra attention, the trouble of bestowing the said attention, to say nothing of the undue elation it might inspire in the recipient's foolish heart, being over-weighted by the remembrance of certain bills considerably overdue, which, unless paid by the time of notice, might make it somewhat awkward for the debtor. He was therefore going to exert himself so far in his own interests as to personally superintend the little fancy rider's act.

In order to do this, he offered an exchange of ring duty with Will Breakneck, who was loudly grumbling with his usual fluency about his inability to keep an appointment which he had made with several pals after his performance.

Epsom's offer was, therefore, joyfully accepted, and Will departed in high glee, while the jockey-rider began coolly calculating how far his pro-

jected venture would extract him from his pecuniary difficulties.

Time went by, however, and the object of his schemes did not make her appearance, and the bell for the band was just sounding, when Signor Patchouli, elated by the lavish praise of the stablemen, was endued with the idea of informing his companion-rider that "Madame Petite was not to appear that evening."

"Who the devil told you that?" asked Epsom, glaring down at the well made-up little man with an ugly look in his green-brown eyes which boded ill to any one who might attempt to joke with him.

"It was been known all day to the company that the poor lady is *indisposée*, as she say."

"Ill again?" muttered Epsom, adding savagely through his teeth as he turned on his heel, an expression which was hardly for the invalid's well-being.

Here was a nice upset to his plans. "No appearance, no screw," was the rule. To say that the jockey-rider was, it was plain, most severely annoyed, would be to put it mildly.

He was in reality in a perfect state of fume, such as defies description; but, aware that his discomfiture was apparent to his companions, he did his best to pass it off, contenting himself with muttering not too refined blessings from time to time, when not engaged in biting the butt of his whip, or switching with it savagely at everything at hand.

Noting, however, after two or three moments thus employed, that Smith, while dressing Daredevil's mane, was enjoying vastly some joke with Signor Patchouli, he (Epsom) instantly imagined himself the cause of their merriment. He at once conceived the idea of standing on his dignity, and venting his spite upon some one for his ill-luck.

So determined, he strode across the apartment, pushed the fat little Italian trainer roughly on one side, much to the derangement of his toilet, and proceeded to find fault—purely of his own making—with the harnessing of his “fiery steed.” The stableman, knowing with whom he had to deal, quietly accepted his loud-voiced raging, and did his best to meet his approval. But Epsom was bent on being put out, and at length carried matters so far as to take the saddle from the animal's back and fling it on the ground, by so doing, bursting one of the straps by which it was fastened, and which it would take some time to repair, to say nothing of the blame which was sure to be attached to the groom if the ring were kept waiting.

Smith had already, more than once, through Epsom's fault, got into disgrace. That the jockey had a grudge against him was very evident. It was generally believed Smith knew more of his master's doing than made his proximity agreeable to the latter, and at this new show of malice the young fellow was tried beyond endurance.

He turned, and not unjustly, on his tormentor with some hot-headed defiance, which was met

with such stinging contempt that the man forgot all self-control, and, raising his arm, would have struck his tormentor a not undeserved but certainly most ill-advised blow.

He, however, found himself more than matched. His upraised arm was caught in an iron grip, such as made him wince with pain, and while he was thus, as it were, defenceless, the lash of his antagonist's short riding-whip was sent stinging across his face, from his forehead to his chin.

It was as brutal a blow as ever one man gave to another. Holding in Daredevil was not calculated to make one's grasp the most gentle one, and to judge by the way he was in the habit of springing forward under his master's touch, the hand that held the whip knew how to cut.

The jockey's grip was in fact sufficient in his merciless mood to have done the arm he held no little injury, but the lash from the whip was like that of the sharpest knife. As from such Smith fell to the ground.

For an instant he lay as it were stunned, then struggled to rise, blood flowing freely from the wound on his face; he was roused to a positive fury, yet even while he tried to regain his footing, the cruel whip was again raised above his head. But this time it did not fall. Alarmed at the prospect of what appeared to be likely to develop into a severe row, Jack Breakneck, the signor, and several others of the company, overcame their fear of incurring Epsom's displeasure, and stood between the two would-be combatants, and before

he could say a word, the unfortunate Smith was hurried off in the direction of the gentlemen's dressing-tent. He managed, however, to shake his fist at the jockey, and utter a blessing on Epsom's head, both of which were received by a light laugh as the jockey tried his whip once or twice in the air, and then bade one of the men near see to the saddling of Daredevil.

He knew full well that he had might, if not right, on his side. Smith had himself attempted to strike the first blow, besides which, jockeys were hard to get, a fact which would have far more weight with Mr Petman than the stableman's bruised arm and disfigured countenance. The affair would be hushed up, Smith dismissed, perhaps, and so one object at least would be gained.

Thus the jockey settled the matter in his own mind, and was venting his remaining spleen by savagely cutting the air with the lash of his whip, when his eyes fell upon the black-cloaked figure in the corner, the stranger girl, who had been a spectator of the foregoing encounter, and not an unmoved one.

At the first commencement of the disturbance she had shrunk back fearfully into her corner. When Smith had fallen she had sprung to her feet with a cry of alarm, and her face, yet pale with the terror she felt as she turned, met the jockey-rider's gaze, and bore plainly on it her opinion of his share in the matter.

It was but for a moment, however, that their eyes met; the brown ones drooped in an instant,

and turning to the signor, who stood near, Epsom inquired in not too civil language "who the deuce she was?"

"She is engaged to take Madame Petite's place," replied the old Italian, inwardly rejoicing at being the one to inform the bully that the lady whom he chose to honour with his attention had a rival.

"Mr Petman has especially engaged her. And put her on trial to-night, of all nights?" said Epsom, suppressing a rather forcible exclamation.

"Trial!" said the little Italian, rolling his loved quid round his mouth, and delighted at being able to discomfort the bully, if only by means of his own invention. "Trial! There is no need. She has belonged to —, the greatest circus in the world, for nearly five years, but wants to travel a bit, and so has joined us. She is wonderful, they tell me, quite a first-class novelty—fancy, of course—beats any one in her line, for, think, has she not many things in her favour? She is young, very clever, and beautiful. Yes, the *La Signorina is bella*," and the old trainer rubbed his hands and looked round him with an air of great conviction, as though a lady who deserved praise from him, and in his own language, must indeed be one of Nature's favoured children.

The listener did not, however, seem so much impressed at this praise of the new comer's personal appearance as of her other attractions.

These, if correctly stated by Patchouli, might, together with her very inconvenient indisposition, severely damage Madame Petite's position in the

company — a most undesirable contingency — which idea certainly did not tend to restore Epsom's equanimity. He turned again to the stranger's corner, and favoured her with such an insulting stare, at which, in spite of her pretended indifference to it, she could not hide a growing discomfort, betrayed by the angry flush which rose to her face and burnt in her pale cheeks.

The insolent gaze, however, was not withdrawn; indeed, Epsom had already advanced a few steps in her direction, no doubt with the intention of gaining a nearer view, perhaps to force his attention upon her, when the band *entr'acte* came to a close, and calling loudly to the men to look sharp into the ring, the ring-master entered the tent. This was a young man of about four-and-twenty years of age, whose office was plainly betokened by his dress, which was somewhat of a better style than his subordinates, and certainly suited him uncommonly well — the dark blue suit with the gold braid and buttons, and white waiscoat, showing off his not unmanly figure to advantage, which, together with his handsome face, clear-cut features, delicate complexion, and curly brown hair, made him not at all unattractive-looking. Added to this, there was a certain self-possessed, dignified air which marked him as somewhat more of a gentleman, at least in outward appearance, than his companions.

There was, however, very little time for more than a brief glance at him, for he entered in

great haste, rang the bell for the performance to begin, called hastily to the men, and with them entered the ring, followed by one of the stablemen leading Daredevil, and after a moment by the jockey rider himself, whose appearance was the signal for a burst of applause, which showed him to be no little favourite with the audience, if not with the actors.

This hearty reception was, however, responded to by a not too respectful nod, and the performance commenced.

And little as there was reason to admire the performer, the performance itself was quite worthy the marks of approbation which were freely bestowed upon it. The jockey knew his business, and on the day of which I write his mood led him to try his steed to the utmost. With a few strokes of his whip he urged the spirited animal to its utmost speed, till it flew like the wind, the sawdust flying under its heavy hoofs, and while thus at full gallop he leapt hurdles, unfastened the saddle, rode without it, stood on the animal's back, leapt from it, sprang sideways then cross-legged upon it, still going at full speed, and the crowning feat of all—making the animal shy violently when in the full swing of a gallop, springing on to his feet on his back, and, when it reared, leaping to the ground only the moment its forefeet touched the sawdust, to leap again on to its back and bring it to a sudden stand-still on its knees—a climax which, as usual, elicited thunders of applause from the spectators.

Yet in spite of the very loud appreciation of his labours, Epsom left the ring with the same dogged demeanour as he had entered it, though judging by Daredevil's condition, he had certainly, as the signor said, taken it out of him.

Now it so happened that as the horse was led into the ante-room, it shook himself free from the groom's hold and reared slightly, much to the terror of the little Japanese children, who were waiting to "go on." They drew back in fear, which Epsom noting, laughed, and would have led the still plunging horse yet closer to them, but a figure interposed. The girl in the corner had risen, and now, without so much as a glance at the children-tormentor, drew them quietly into one corner and gently calmed their fears.

Epsom's brow puckered into an ugly frown. He said nothing, but turned out of the tent into the dressing-room with an ugly look on his face which boded no good to whoever had offended him.

The young girl who had evidently done so, seemed, however, to willingly forget his existence when relieved of his presence. From behind the curtains which hid the entrance to the ring, she watched the not too interesting performance of the children she had befriended, and when they passed her on their exit, did not forget to smile and nod kindly to them. It was only a little action, but it spoke of a kind heart, and it cheered the little ones, in whose lives gentle words and actions were not too plentiful. And just then there was

every reason for the girl to have been too much engrossed in her own affairs to have had any thought for others. She was a stranger to all, and what was more, about to make her first trial for an engagement after many repulses, and that on a strange horse, and among people to whom she was perfectly unknown—whom she did not yet know how to meet, were they friends or foes. She could not tell, but as George Epsom re-entered the tent in the livery dress of the ring she met his glance, there was an ugly look on his face which made her nervous for the first time about the performance which was to come.

CHAPTER V.

A LITTLE FAIRY.

YES, the moment has come for the trial; for as the little Japanese children are dragged wearily from the ante-room to the dressing-room, there to resume their rightful nationality, the ring-master hurried into the tent.

"Petite's not here, I suppose?" he asked, no doubt knowing how often the warmth of the worthy Petman's anger and his threat of dismissal had had the effect of completely curing indisposition. "Petite not here?"

"No, sir," said one of the men; "but the boss has sent some one to take her place."

"Send her in sharp, then;" and the ring-master gave the signal to the band. The stranger began to unfasten her cloak, while one of the grooms led forward a big, ugly-looking white horse, on which he hastily adjusted a pad. The girl advanced towards him with a not too favourable glance in the direction of the animal, evidently prepared for her riding. It was, to say the least of it, not too prepossessing in appearance.

The band struck up, and at the same moment Epsom entered the tent in the livery dress of the ring.

“Look sharp, Lurton,” he said, “the governor’s coming. Those children are five minutes over time, and the Breaknecks ’ll swear if they have to cut their show short. Who’s on now? Oh, the new lady—going to ride the Emperor. Hope she knows how to fall; he’s not been in the best of tempers lately, and that short step of his plays the deuce with any one but Madame Petite. But that’s the lady’s look-out, if she risks riding him.”

Although the jockey addressed himself to the groom, and did not so much as glance in the “young lady’s” direction, he took care that his words should be uttered loud enough to reach her ears; while as he spoke he slyly touched with the whip he held the Emperor, as he called the horse she was to ride, causing the animal to start backwards and plunge in a hasty manner.

The effect of this attempt to intimidate its intended rider apparently succeeded, and the jockey turned and entered the ring with an ugly smile on his face.

The girl was, in fact, anything but looking forward to her performance, and half regretted having accepted the engagement, much as she needed it, on such terms. Her hand shook slightly as she ran it through her hair, and she looked nervously round, as though in search of some friendly face to reassure her. But the tent was empty, save for two grooms, who paused in their

work and stared somewhat rudely at her as she laid aside her cloak. The next moment she had stepped through the velvet curtains and was in the ring. The grooms and attendants drew aside to let her pass, and her appearance was greeted by a considerable burst of applause.

This she acknowledged by a slight bend of her gracefully poised head, and almost before she knew where she was, without waiting for assistance, had sprung on to the Emperor, and begun her "act."

Timidly at first she made the tour of the ring, but after a moment, sprang to her feet and went through the usual kneeling, jumping, and simple performances, followed by the more difficult feats of standing upright on the horse while leaping barred gates, leaping banners, the broadest in the show, jumping through balloons—all with the agility and care which betrayed her no novice in the art, and won her well-merited applause—not that there was anything very remarkable in what she did until the last portion of the act; but to it belongs an incident which, as it concerns the end of this tale, may here be related.

The great feature of the new fancy rider's act was to be a skipping-rope dance—the climax, jumping over one broad banner and through a hoop, a feat requiring no little nerve.

The young lady, however, prepared to undertake it without any apparent trepidation, having by that time completely recovered from her fit of nervousness.

She made the circuit of the ring twice, waving aside the banner and balloon, and was on the point of making the desired leap. As she neared it, a glance at the man who held the drum showed her it was the jockey's evil face, and the next moment either the Emperor made the false step already spoken of, or Epsom's hold was not fast enough, but certain it was that his hand slipped, the girl staggered, the hoop remained caught in her feet—she must have fallen, but by a mighty effort saved herself from what must have been a nasty tumble, and that with an ease and dexterity that won loud applause from the audience, who evidently appreciated the skill of the young artiste.

It was, in fact, a clever thing to do. Even those in the ring joined in the burst of applause, and as she sprang to the ground the girl found herself being lustily cheered, while the men who had regarded her entrance somewhat coldly, looking upon her as somewhat of an interloper, now pressed eagerly forward for the honour of being allowed to conduct her from the ring. Even the ring-master himself wished for that office, a most unusual thing for him to so far deign to notice one of the performers. But no doubt he considered one who had won such a mark of approval from so exalted a person as the mayor was worthy his notice also.

With the intention, no doubt, of bestowing this, he stepped forward as the favoured artiste sprang lightly from her horse to the ground.

To his surprise his proffered hand was not noticed. The girl hardly so much as glanced at him, but with a smile as of recognition turned to—to whom?—none other than Jerry, the clown, whose tricks and antics had come in the intervals of her performance. Jerry evidently, as one could tell by his face, in spite of the paint, was totally at a loss to understand why the honour was awarded to him. He was a queer sort of fellow, this Jerry—a general favourite among the company, for a wonder occupying that position without possessing a proportionate number of enemies, as rough-and-ready a fellow that ever existed, but pure gold to the very core, in spite of a not too prepossessing exterior. As I have said, he was a clown, and a very good one, too, such a favourite always with his audience, especially the younger members of it. He had only to poke his painted face, with its skull-cap covering every scrap of hair, and crowned by the most absurd of sugar-loaf hats, round the edge of the curtains at the entrance to the ring, and the boys were certain to give him such a welcome as made the place ring, while the appearance of his rather short figure, clad in the most voluminous suit of bright scarlet, ornamented, or rather disfigured, by large black cats in the position that animal assumes when she encounters one of the canine tribe—one of these especially prominent in the middle of his back—was sure to double the merriment.

Such was Jerry's costume, one in itself likely to

cause laughter, even if the wearer's dry humour and ape-like tricks failed to do so.

But this was not likely, and the day of which I write had been no exception to the rule which announced the clown's performance a decided success. It had gone well that night, and had Jerry been less intent upon his work he might have seen he had an amused spectator even in the ring itself.

This, as was not likely, was not in one of the regular company. The old clowning tricks were too well-known to them to arouse even a languid interest. No, the spectator alluded to was the young girl, the new fancy rider who now, when the performance was ended, preferred his escort from the ring to that of the more distinguished ring-master. Jerry was astonished, but as there was nothing *else* to do but to take the little white-silk gloved hand which was held out to him, he took it—a little awkwardly it must be confessed—in one of his own big hot ones—one, two, three little skips, and the lady was inside the crimson curtains.

But his office was not to end there. The audience were evidently very well pleased with the performance they had just witnessed, and loudly called for the re-appearance of the performer to receive their well-merited commendation. Thus Jerry found himself leading the young lady back into the ring and again conducting her into the ante-room. Here he dropped the hand he held, and looked curiously towards his companion.

A smile of recognition met his gaze, and a pair of brown eyes, bright with fun, were raised to his.

Jerry was, as he afterwards expressed it, "perfectly at sea." The girl was not so, for smiling even more at his evident astonishment, she looked up at him, and said, in pretty broken English—

"I see you don't know me."

"Well," said Jerry, twitching his cap off his head, and glancing down, still somewhat confused, "can't say I do."

"I should have said you do not remember me, is it not? Have you forgotten the night at Grimston, when you were so good as to fight those men who annoyed me?"

A sudden light dawned upon Jerry's mental vision.

"What," he said, "are you the young lady I spoke to that night? Who'd have thought it?"

And in his astonishment Jerry so far forgot his manners as to set his cap at the back of his head, pucker up his lips into a noiseless whistle, and inserting his hands into the pockets of his trousers, draw them out to the farthest extent, while his greeny-grey eyes took unconsciously mental note of the figure before him.

The same girl he had rescued from the insults of the drunken wretches on the night of the last performance at Grimston! As Jerry very frankly put it, "Who'd have thought it?" For truly so great was the contrast, even allowing for the altered circumstances between then and now,

that there was small wonder Jerry should "not have thought it."

What he had seen then we already know; what he saw now has yet to be described. And that was—the same slightly made figure, clad this time, not in the shabby black dress so soiled and travel-stained, but in the daintiest, yet simplest of fancy (I should say fairy) costumes of the palest mauve satin, tastefully trimmed with lace, and covering the usual ballet skirt, the bodice cut slightly low at the neck, exposing a delicately moulded throat, which rivalled in its creamy purity the soft lace which was gathered up round it, the sleeves short, and showing a pair of little white arms half hidden by the silk gloves already mentioned; her feet encased in satin slippers wondrously small, and, if of but poor material, neat and pretty also, while to complete this dainty costume a perfect bundle of dusky-brown curls were caught up loosely by some fresh white flowers, a few which had strayed from confinement resting in picturesque confusion over her shoulder, while others, even more rebellious, had broken loose altogether, and stood up in a perfect halo round the well-shaped little head.

And the face beneath? Well, that of course had not undergone any material alteration, and yet—no, it was not the same as before, for there was the great difference one finds in reviewing the same landscape when overshadowed by clouds and when gilded by the brightening sun's rays.

When Jerry had first seen this face it was when the clouds of sadness had darkened it. Now he

looked upon it with the sunshine of happiness warming it into life, and making it doubly what it was when seen in the gloom. Yes, indeed. If the little round face, with its delicately-moulded features and pretty brown eyes had taken the young clown's fancy when he had first looked upon them on that dreary night after the performance at Thurley, there was little wonder the sight of the same face, with the brown eyes full of fun, and looking up at him with a half shy, half amused glance, should not only irresistibly please him for the moment, but somehow a picture of it finds its way into his mind, and, what is more, stays there, until—but I do not think I had better define how long the impression remained.

Rather let me come back to my story, with many apologies for having dallied so long over this description of my heroine, who after all, perhaps, did not look half so captivating as hundreds of other girls whom the reader may have seen in the ring. Let me give as an excuse for so doing the fact of my wishing to set her forth before inquiring eyes exactly as she appeared to my hero on those two first occasions he saw her.

Be this as it may, he certainly looked very droll as he bent his stunted little figure in order to get a better view of the young lady who stood before him. "Who'd have thought it?" was his exclamation, a very frank, if hardly a strictly polite one.

But the object of his comment did not seem to see anything at all amiss with his out-

spoken wonder, but she answered the comprehensive glance at her little person with a bright smile.

"Ah," she said gaily, in the pretty broken English, which, added to her singularly soft, gentle voice, gave, at least to one listener, a double charm to every word she uttered. "Ah," with a quaint little gesture of the hand to emphasize the expression, "am I so much changed in so short a time, or is it that you have not—what is it you call it—not any remembrance?"

"I don't think it's that," said Jerry, rather shyly. "I don't think it's that. I know you now; it wasn't very likely I should forget your face soon, that is—" he stammered, compliments, as I have said, not being at all in his line—he was so used to the coarse expressions, so called, which passed among those around him that he seemed half ashamed of hearing one pass his lips, was quite surprised at having framed it, and not a little angry with himself too—"that is, you see, you were in trouble—and—" he was going to say "and looked it," but paused, thinking this might sound somewhat rough, and, like many people, having put his foot in a hole, instead of letting the matter rest, made matters worse by trying to withdraw it, and so showed the size of the rent of his manners. "You were in trouble, I helped you out," this he thought sounded very like asking for more gratitude, so he hastened to add, "Not that that's an unusual thing for me, I'm always doing it—("Jerry, my boy," was here his

inward comment, as through force of habit he made use of a "ring expression," "Jerry, my boy, you're a born musician—you're Al at the concertina, you came out strong as first fiddle, while, bless me, if here you wouldn't take the prize for blowing your own trumpet)—that is, you see, I remember you well—like, because—because you're very like some one I knew once—an old friend of mine—in fact, my great aunt" ("That's a lie, Jerry, you never had an aunt, my friend"). "My wonder," he added, to try and cover his very innocent fib, "is, that you remember—that is, recognised me."

"Well, I cannot say I did exactly that," and another smile played around the little red mouth, as the brown eyes, dancing with fun, took in every detail of the clown's absurd costume, which they evidently heartily appreciated. "To tell you the strict truth" (Jerry here felt a twinge of conscience), "I knew your voice" ("raised in the everlasting, Here I am again," thought Jerry, with, he knew not why, a half-unconscious wish that the recognition had taken place through means of other utterances than the well-worn phrase).

"Well, I can't say I recognised you so quickly, and I couldn't make out why it was you elected to let me bring you off, when the young master himself was handy; it ain't often he concerns himself. If I'd have been you, if you want to get on here, I'd have let him exert himself to take notice of you."

"Do you think I ought? I did not think of it

—I never do of those sort of things. I am not used to—what is it you say—contriving those things.”

This was said with such an air of perfect simplicity, in spite of a would-be anxious look in the brown eyes, that there was no mistaking the truthfulness of the statement.

Be this as it may, there was something so winning in the girl's manner that Jerry restrained a smile which rose to his lips, drew himself up from his absurd attitude, twitched up his cap off his head, with a motion of apology, and said heartily,—

“And so you're one of us ; I thought as much—made a rough guess at that the first time I saw you, because” (no doubt anxious to give his right one for the supposition, for fear a wrong one should be taken), “because I somehow guessed you weren't the sort of girl to go in among those rough folks unless you went on business. But I didn't expect to see you again so soon. When I heard we'd got a new hand on to take Madame Petite's place, I didn't think it was you, although I might have guessed it, but even when I saw you, I like to be so busy when I am at work, that I didn't notice.” And in a few minutes Jerry found himself chatting away quite at his ease with the stranger about the success of her late performance, and such matters relative to the business, in which he found her to have but little knowledge, considering her skill in riding, but this she explained by telling frankly how

hitherto she had always had her ather to see after the matter for her—ah, hitherto—until that terrible time, just three months before this story opens, when a severe cold had stirred the treacherous seeds of consumption, and two short weeks had seen the feeble flame flicker and die out altogether.

So much Jerry learnt in his few moments' conversation with the girl—a conversation which was carried on much to the amusement of some of the grooms who were standing by, who inquired among themselves whether the new comer was a relative of the clown's.

“Cuss me, if I've ever seen him engaged so long with a woman before,” said Jones, busily engaged in plaiting the Emperor's mane preparatory to the morrow's performance—a process which was somewhat difficult, owing to the dislike evinced to it by that animal. “Must be a relation.”

“Bless'd if he ain't precious lucky then. Wish I had a few relations half as good-looking and clever at the work! I'd make 'em keep me. Did you see how the gov'nor was keeping his eye on her? Madame Petite has made a mess of it this time. By Jove! won't Epsom fume.” And here followed some remarks of hardly a complimentary nature to the jockey.

At the same moment Jerry's supposed relation was saying, “I was so vexed at that slip of mine, it was so what you call clumsy. Do you think Mr Petman thought so of it?”

“Was it a slip?” said Jerry, whose quick eye

had assured him to the contrary. "I thought," he paused—it was no use troubling the girl with the knowledge that so soon she had made an enemy in the camp, and that one not a little to be feared. "I thought," he went on, "it was part of the show. Epsom has the trick himself, but he daren't use it too often."

"Epsom," said the girl; "is he the jockey rider?"

"Yes, he was holding the balloon," slipped out from Jerry; but he had no time to try and repair his blunder, as he imagined it, for as he spoke Epsom entered the ring.

The scowl had not disappeared from his brow. He was evidently annoyed at the failure of his malicious trick to the young fancy rider. He glanced in her direction, favoured her with an ill-disguised scowl, which fortunately she did not see, and then crossing left the tent, no doubt to seek Madame Petite and consult with her upon the difficulties of the situation.

Scarcely had he disappeared when the curtains parted again, and this time the ring-master entered. He also favoured the two so earnestly in conversation with a languid glance out of his grey eyes, and then strolled up to them.

"Miss Hartzmann, I believe?"

At the sound of her name the girl started, and turned from where she stood slowly drawing off her white gloves and chatting pleasantly to her companion. In reply to the ring-master's question, she bent her head with that shy, graceful motion which distinguished all her actions.

"Mr Petman desires me to say that he will see you before you go. You will find him in the small tent at the entrance."

"I thank you, and will go to him."

In spite of the foreign accent which — (Jerry wondered why, but knew afterwards, that it was when the speaker was either nervous or excited) — was plainly distinguishable, the ring-master evidently did not recognise in the speaker a fellow-country-woman, and as he turned away, muttered, half to himself, half aloud, in German, "Dainty as a fairy, and yet withal a mortal!"

The words, though evidently not so intended, fell upon the girl's ears. She started, a sudden flush of rich warm colour dyed her face, she made a step forward, and seeming to forget that in acknowledging she knew the import of his words she betrayed consciousness of their meaning, said, with childish eagerness, "You speak German. You come from my country."

The ring-master could not but smile at the question and tone. He was used to meeting people from his own country, who certainly never evinced so much interest as this girl apparently felt. But it was impossible to look down at the little figure in its theatrical dress, which was yet so simple and pretty, and at the bright face with the look of expectant inquiry in the sweet brown eyes, and not feel not just the least little bit flattered by her interest, but also in a measure to return it.

This was something of the feeling which that

one glance at the girl's face aroused in the young ring-master ; certainly he was nothing loth that on the ground of their nationality his acquaintance should be so frankly claimed.

He replied to the girl's question in his own language, leaving her no room to doubt that her supposition was right.

Nor, this done, did he seem very eager to end the conversation ; nay, rather lingered at her side, while Jerry, who thus found himself somewhat left out of the conversation, drew on one side, and for a moment watched the two, who saw in each other a friend because each came from the same country.

And truly as they stood together they made no unfavourable picture—the young fellow, the dress of the ring becoming his figure to advantage, his whip still in hand—his head, with its crop of brown curls, bent in an attitude of listening—his handsome face bearing on it a look of languid interest which became it well, and showed it in contrast to the animated one of his companion, which, in spite of more than one effort on his part to obtain a good view, was kept persistently turned away from him.

It was curious to notice the contrast in the girl's manner to that of a few moments before. To Jerry she had been as frank and outspoken as if they had been old friends. As she stood before the young ring-master a sudden shyness seemed to have come over her.

She hardly once after that first time raised her

eyes to his face; his were pretty freely bent down to meet her gaze had she done so. One hand was busily engaged in smoothing down the satin folds of her dress, the other half unconsciously fingered a string of golden pearls she wore twisted round her throat. Two things betrayed her nervousness. Almost each time she spoke, the plump white shoulders rose and fell under their covering of soft white lace; while, from time to time, as the soft voice of her companion uttering the sound she seemed to drink in so greedily—that utterance of her own language—the bright flush in her face deepened to a sudden glow of warm crimson.

Although at the time he did not know it, Jerry noted all these things, and by-and-by— But there, let the by-and-by care for itself.

For a few moments Jerry watched the *tête-à-tête* which had grown out of his own with a stranger, then, satisfied that for her to have an ally in the young ring-master would considerably enhance the girl's prospect of getting an engagement, he left the tent, and proceeded to divest himself of his ring costume, and to appear once more in the world in the ordinary dress of rational mortals, although he once said, "There's more fools wear light lavenders, frock coats, and top-hats than ever one sees in the ring or behind the footlights."

He saw no more of the little German girl that night, but if you ask me the strict truth, he did not wholly forget her existence, for on his way

home more than once when a little figure, soberly clad in black, passed him, he strained his neck to catch a glimpse of the face beneath the bonnet or hat, whichever the case might be, as if half expecting to recognise in the wearer some one who was not very far from his thoughts.

But each time he was disappointed. Miss Hartzmann had long before sought her humble lodgings in a totally different part of the town, where, if she dreamt at all, I fear I must own it was not the friendly, but certainly not handsome, face of the good-natured young clown that haunted her slumbers, if other better-favoured features did trouble, or rather, shall I say kindle, in them a touch of romance. Whose they were I am not at liberty to say.

CHAPTER VI.

MY HERO.

MY hero ! The hero of my tale, which I am afraid will not be much of a one after all, only telling a little of the affairs of a small corner—a very small corner—of this busy world of ours, the tale of one whose whole life was all for others, and who yet, it seems to me, had a more than an unusually large share of troubles and trials.

Yes, although he bore his troubles bravely, worked as earnestly as the rest of his fellow-creatures, his life, compared with theirs, was perhaps more worthy of reward in the end, I am sorely afraid the hero of this poor little tale will at first appear anything but likely to inspire the admiration that the title seems to demand.

Truth to tell, by name and vocation he wasn't a hero at all. He was simply, and quite contented to remain so, Jerry the clown. Nothing very heroic about the sound of that, you see.

Jerry the clown!—a circus clown! Not even one of those magical beings who appear only at Christmas amidst the glare of the dazzlingly

gorgeous transformation scene, ready with the well-known greeting, "Here we are again," favouring the idea that their existence is of the butterfly order; that during the summer—who ever saw a real clown when the foxgloves were in bloom? one might as well talk of a sea-side holiday in December—they have been curled up in a snug chrysalis in order to be able to burst forth upon us in winter in all the splendour of paint and powder, and gorgeously ridiculous costume, to us appearing not one whit changed since we saw them twelve months before, nay, since perhaps we as children laughed at the same pranks and tricks that please us still, in spite of the fact that happy childhood lies far behind us, and sober man or womanhood has laid their care upon us. No, I say, Jerry was not one of these. He was simply a circus clown. When I say that, I don't even mean he belonged to one of those world-renowned affairs which rise from the level of an ordinary circus into the more dignified state of a hippodrome. No, Jerry did not even belong to one of these. He was, as we have seen, just a clown in a travelling circus, which, even though it belonged to the mighty Petman, as he loved to consider himself, was, after all, no very grand show, its mission, as its name implied, to travel about from place to place to give the simple-minded country folk a taste of the delights afforded by the big cities, the pleasures of which appear to them to be almost too delightful even to be dreamed of.

Such was the company which I have already introduced to my readers, and of which my heroine had already made the acquaintance, so luckily for her, as it afterwards appeared.

To it Jerry had belonged ever since he could remember; in fact, from the very moment of his birth, that event taking place when Papa Jerry was in the ring going through his marvellous tumbling act, which consisted in apparently doing his best to dislocate every bone in his own powerful frame, and at the same time to do as much injury as was possible to the wiry, boneless bodies of his numerous offspring.

Jerry, senior, I may add in passing, was the first strong man of the show, and it was during an "attitudinising" interval, as Jack Breakneck called it, a not inappropriate name for that period, when the young Jerries, already six in number, who, being able to walk, were, figuratively speaking, supposed to have inherited an inborn knowledge how to tumble, when I say these boneless infants devoted some moments to the assuming of various attitudes suggestive of "Defiance," "At His Mercy," "Adoration," "Pity," and such like striking *tableaux*. The second strong man of the company, actuated, no doubt, by malicious motives, took upon himself to announce to the happy (?) father the further addition to his family in the shape of the ugliest little red-faced, green-eyed, "puggy"-featured young hopeful—Jerry number seven. If, as I have said, the intention of the second strong man was

slightly tinged by professional jealousy, he did not for one moment trump. Hercules — in private life, Jerry—was so overcome by the news imparted to him, that, it is reported, he unconsciously lifted his two largest weights in one hand, and never noticed his mistake until a tumultuous burst of applause from the astonished audience roused him to the fact of his great achievement.

Indeed, so loud was the appreciation of the feat, that the worthy Petman, then somewhat younger than when we first make his acquaintance, offered our hero's father double his salary to repeat the experiment, say every week, an offer, however, which Jerry senior was compelled to decline, for, as he said to his wife, with a doleful shake of his head, "considering the circumstances, he didn't quite see how it was to be managed." And of course Mrs Jerry agreed with him.

I may here add that for his intention to injure Jerry senior's professional reputation, an intention which, as we have seen, had the very reverse effect, the second strong man was most severely punished.

The week following the addition to the family of his superior in strength, the wife of the said artist presented him with twins, the receipt of which news had such a disastrous effect upon him as to render him so weak that from that day forth he was incapable of lifting even so much as one weight. He was a strong man no longer,

and the last heard of him was that he had given up that line of business and taken a new one, which consisted, according to some opinions, in trying his utmost to commit a mortal injury on the bodies of his twin sons, or at least to cripple them for life, but, fortunately for them, not possessed of sufficient power even to accomplish so slight if somewhat singular an object.

But to return to my tale.

The existence of young Jerry, commenced under what were considered auspicious circumstances, was not later on distinguished by any event worthy of note.

Like his elder brothers, he received a thorough, if somewhat rough, education in the tumbling business, and until he was eighteen continued to form one of what his father advertised as the "Happy Jerry Family," a name which was frequently belied by the numerous black eyes, swollen lips, and such like evidences of family rows.

At this point in his career, Jerry senior, who had long since grown to be somewhat chary of having his weights too closely examined, managed to let one of the heaviest fall upon his chest.

So trifling was the inconvenience it occasioned him, that had it not been for a whispered reminder on the part of his eldest son, the strong man would most assuredly have continued his performance as though nothing unusual had happened.

The whispered caution of Jerry junior No. 1, however, recalled him (Jerry senior) to the fact of the situation, and with great credit to his powers of deception, he allowed himself to be carried limp and helpless from the ring, amidst the splendidly simulated sobs and terror of his numerous offspring. And now comes the strangest part of the story. Just when bills of the most gorgeous description, both as regards colour and the quantity of notes of interrogation, were in the act of being printed, to be posted on every available point of 'vantage in the town, announcing the accident and timely recovery of Hercules, the strongest man in the world ; Mr Petman having agreed with the famous invalid, for a certain consideration, that his recovery should be postponed to give time to make what he called a big advertisement out of the accident—news was brought which somewhat upset these far-seeing calculations.

On the same evening, when the performing Hercules covered himself with glory in the eyes of his fellow artists—who, as he said, were in the swim, by aiding to make a hit out of the accident dodge—thereby caused it to be officially (*i.e.*, not to say truthfully) stated, that owing to a severe accident, he would not, as usual, go through his wonderful feats—as Will Breakneck's father, who was a clown in his time, artistically in more ways than one, put it, he gave up the strong-man job—light weights even couldn't make him hang on. He went all of a sudden as weak as a rat—

had no more strength in him than a new-born baby. He did the trick too well—some one as he didn't expect had his eye on him—and gave him the wink as how he'd best drop it, which he did, just as easy as he did the weight. He worn't no use; we're all," as he said "in the swim, but his time was up. This show worn't good enough for him no longer. They wanted him in a better one, so they just gave him no bell nor nothing, no music, but just hustled him straight into the big ring, and afore a audience as knows what is and what isn't, and let him take his chance. It worn't no use him keeping up the game no longer—even with light weights it was no go—so he just gave up and went as weak as a rat, and went off as meek as a blessed baby."

The juggler's words, strangely confused as they may seem to some ears unaccustomed to "pro jargon," were only too true.

The trick had been played too well; so well, in fact, that when reality took its place, no one scarcely knew how, except as Will put it—singularly quoting words from a book on which his eyes had never rested for many years—"The strong man became as a little child." He did go off quietly. His exit was just as calm as though he was going to sleep for a while instead of for ever.

In the morning it was known that the show had lost one of its greatest attractions.

The strong man was dead.

His widow wept copiously, but I think the per-

son most concerned was the worthy Petman. All his trouble over the big advertisement was to be wasted. He was bemoaning this when suddenly (he had been dining somewhat lavishly on stewed eels and champagne, which may account for anything so brilliant occurring to his not too vivid imagination) he was struck with what he called a bright idea, the result of which was that on the following day bills concerning the strong man were after all issued. The announcement these conveyed was a somewhat singular one.

They stated in letters of the bright scarlet and green the sorrowful fact of the death of the renowned Hercules, and added, that to do honour to this, the strongest man the world had seen since the days of David and Goliath (this caused some dispute among several members of the Sunday school, arguments being rife as to whether David or Goliath was the man of power, or more than once, indeed, whether they were not both so gifted), it was decided to honour his memory and benefit his widow, by giving him what was singularly called a "professional funeral," to be immediately followed by a performance, the proceeds of which were to be placed at the service of his bereaved family.

The meaning of the expression, "a professional funeral," was also the cause of much contention.

"Cuss me," said one wag, after reading the aforesaid bill over half a dozen times in a loud voice for the benefit of those around him who had

not received the advantages of education ; “ Cuss me, if they’d have said a property funeral I could have understood it—buried nightly at 9.30 P.M., you know—but a professional funeral—I give it up.”

And the young man turned away, no doubt thoroughly satisfied that what was beyond his comprehension would be far above that of ordinary mortals, such as he was not.

The true explanation of the phrase, however, was soon given.

The funeral of Hercules—or rather of all that remained of his once mighty frame—was appointed to take place at one o’clock.

Accordingly, at that hour, the whole town was on the *qui vive* to have their curiosity satisfied, which was done, but in a manner somewhat different to what even the wildest imagination had conjured up. The idea was one which the worthy Petman had picked up in France, and the manner in which it was carried out was certainly singular in the extreme.

Towards mid-day signs of subdued bustle and preparation were heard in the covered courtyard which for the time was the abiding-place of the show ; and a little later, through the gates and out into the town streamed such a procession as surely never before had been seen.

At first sight this appeared to be the usual pageant which announced the entry and exit of the Petman show, but a second glance completely altered the idea.

The show it was to be sure, but on a very different errand to the usual one.

Let me describe it.

First and foremost, as usual, came an imposing band of grooms in their splendid costumes of green velvet coats, top boots with gold spurs, and three-cornered plumed hats, the leader distinguished by a crest somewhat larger than the rest; next in order eight ponies driven single-handed by the trainer in his costume which somewhat resembled that of a senator—inappropriate as it might be considered—the long silver beard, round velvet cap, and flowing crimson robes making his a rather imposing appearance; then the juggler's car, on which on a gorgeously painted throne, raised in the midst of numerous stands of "implements," as Will Breakneck called them, the man of tricks posed in a most dignified attitude; then more horses, gaily caparisoned, remarkable for their arched necks and the pretty manner in which they picked their way; then the performing dogs on their car, their mistress keeping strict guard over them, in a costume which she boasted had been worn by her during her performance, which had been witnessed by his Majesty Napoleon III. and had been greatly admired by him; then the usual complement of lords and ladies in their gorgeous robes, some of the trappings of their chargers sweeping the ground, the plumes waving in the wind; interspersed amongst these, bearers with the banners of every colour, shade and description fluttering from the poles, and, stay, before the

procession moves further we have discovered what there is curious in its appearance, for see on each arm the grooms have a black band fastened, the banner-bearers likewise, the banners partly hidden by the same sombre drapery of *crépe*; the juggler wears a broad scarf of the same over his gay dress; his car and that of the dog trainer is likewise decorated; the dogs wear the same coloured bows instead of their usual gay collars; the horses have the same amidst their gay trappings; the bandsmen, too, wear the same badge, and the time to which they play "Lo, the conquering hero comes," is very slow, and they march almost solemnly to it.

What does it all mean? These *crépe* badges—this slow march? Who is the "hero?" There is no need to ask the question twice, for behind the band, surrounded by more knights than ladies, and drawn by eight horses, which step slowly along, owing no obedience to any bridle or rein, their trapping almost entirely hidden by the *crépe* scarves, comes what is known as the Britannia car. Her Majesty, it is true, stood in regal state at the head, but a widow's weeds showed from under her helmet; round her, grouped in their most effective attitude of "submission," were her numerous offspring, but the body of the car is, in this instance, draped entirely in black, on which reposed, in solitary state, for the last time taking his place in the show, all that remained of the strongest man in the world. A plain deal coffin, adorned by no brass ornaments, but such floral tri-

butes as his friends had been able to bestow at the foot, somewhat after the idea of a soldier's accoutrements ; the weights he had been wont to throw when alive were piled up one above the other, a *crépe* banner waving over all. Following this car and its singular load, came the other cars and wonders of the show, the rear as usual closed by the clown, in honour of the occasion seated the right way upon his patient ass, and followed by the manager, wearing, also in honour of the dismal occasion, a pair of black gloves and a broad hatband.

Never before had such a singular procession traversed English streets ! The inhabitants of N—— gathered in throngs to mark its progress, marking in open-mouthed wonder each detail ; at every step some gazer joined the crowd which already followed in its steps, determined to see the end of the strange affair, until, when the cemetery was reached, the followers numbered many hundreds.

At the burial ground gates, a walking procession was hastily formed—the huge coffin, hoisted on the shoulders of seven of the knights, headed by the trainer, and followed by the bereaved widow supported by the manager.

Surely never before had such a scene been enacted as that presented by this singular gathering round “the strong man’s” grave ; the gorgeous and singular dresses of the mourners, in contrast to those of the wondering spectators, the weeping widow and her seven fatherless children—a sorry sight—their grief for one who had been

after all a good father to them strangely at variance with their costumes.

But it was over at last, and the procession streamed back to town, at a faster rate than it had left it, for it was drawing near the time for the evening performance, and Mr Petman was a little anxious as to its being a success.

But he need not have feared.

Thus, a little later, those who had wept beside a comrade's grave were disporting themselves amidst the applause and laughter of a crowded audience.

At first, a few of the company were rather, as the ring-master put it, inclined to moralise, the first clown especially being very much given that way. This was excusable, as his father had been a Methodist parson of some standing, but had ill-treated his wife to such a degree, that his young son, of whom I speak, had run away and joined a circus as a clown, at which business he did far better than ever his father before him. He could not, however, always prevent the old liking for speechifying, and in the case in question had to be reduced to order by the administration of a quart of "half-and-half," which had the effect of effectually stopping his mouth and performance too.

The show, however, was a great success, and so closed the chequered career of the mighty Hercules.

His wife and children, as I have said, mourned him sincerely, and then, recalled to the fact that

regretting the dead will not keep the living alive, began to consider what was best to be done.

It was decided that the Happy Family must be broken up.

The sum realised by the funeral performance, as it got called, was sufficient to enable Mrs Jerry, once one of the most imposing Britannias in any show in the United Kingdom, and at the same time one of the weakest members of the strong man's United family, to set up a mangle, with which, and the memory of her departed glory, she still, if standing at her front door in a little hut somewhere in Dust Heap Alley, found herself, much to the admiration of her neighbours, who were familiar with her antecedents, assuming the old dignified posture; indeed, it is rumoured, I cannot say with how much truth, that when rheumatics, asthma, and suds had done their work, and the old lady was well-nigh following her strong man to the big town where performers went in one by one, to which no procession with bands and banners and flags ever wended its way, it is rumoured, I say, that with her last expiring effort the ex-Britannia rose from her bed, wrapped her now shrivelled form in a gorgeous table cover, clapped a cake tin, or cullender—it is uncertain which, tradition points to the latter—upon her head, rested one hand upon a battered tea-tray, with the other supported herself upon a gigantic fork with which it had been her habit to fork her linen from out of the depths of her

gigantic copper, and so, like the Emperor Claudius, a humble but resolute imitator, died standing.

As I have said, whether this tale is true or not it is not in my power to say. My acquaintance-ship with Dust Hole Alley is but slight, therefore my information lacks the support of personal knowledge.

Of the rest of the strong man's family, save, of course, he with whom this story has to do, I must also own to knowing but little.

The eldest of his numerous family, it is believed, kept to the tumbling business, until a broken arm made him unfit for the business, so, having always been of a religious turn, he became a captain in the Salvation Army, where the power of his exhortations was greatly increased by the fact that he was known, when greatly agitated in some good cause, to stand on his head for several minutes, to resume his natural position by throwing a double somersault, and even sometimes, when extra fervour was required, to make a series of wheels which would have made any street boy green with envy.

This line of conduct had the effect of calling many to the good cause, which recompensed for the slight damage to the uniform which it occasioned!

Of the six remaining youths, three married out of the business, and went into trade, their spouses objecting to the show; the remaining two thought they could make more out of the street dodge, and to this day you may, during your summer holiday in some south of England resort, see two wizened old men, huddled in dirty, patched coats,

originally blankets, beneath which are "baggy fleshings" and costumes of the dingiest and most tawdry sort, who with great care and no small difficulty perform a few tricks such as any street-Arab would be ashamed to execute.

Of the three in business, one, who with his wife's dowry set himself up in a nice grocery store, had always a lingering affection for the old business. When the honeymoon was over, he used to practise his old tricks in the shop, until obliged to forbear owing to the avalanche of soap, candles, matches, sides of bacon, pounds of sugar, etc., that his tumblers involved upon his head, to say nothing of more than one gentle reminder from his wife that "the shop was bought with her money, and she wasn't going to have it upset by no impish tricks."

One day, somewhat later in his career, after following a travelling circus for two miles and a half out of the town, during which time his affectionate wife was busily engaged, not in looking after the shop, but in flirting violently with the hairdresser round the corner, the ex-acrobat was found dead in a little outhouse to his home, his position, when discovered, leading to the supposition that he had expired in the effort to throw a double-hander.

What had induced one of his age to attempt such a feat remains a mystery, but it was generally believed that he was incited to the mad attempt by his wife, who certainly rather favoured the idea by marrying, a fortnight after her hus-

band's death, the identical hairdresser, who taught her how to dye her auburn locks a lovely gold, and then amused himself, in the intervals of his visits to the "Castle," five doors down, by pulling out the said fair locks in handfuls.

Thus was Jerry senior avenged.

Of the family then there only remains Jerry, our hero, with whom we have to deal.

Strangely enough, his career has been the least eventful of all.

When his brothers, one by one, left the show, he alone stuck to it and the old business, jogging along quite contentedly.

Of his character I leave my reader to judge.

Such was Jerry, my hero. Not much of a one you may say, but, dear reader, he has but just begun his part; if to the end he plays that well or ill, that is the time to laud or condemn him. I must own, though, that he did not look much like a hero, as he stood just within the crimson curtains of the tent, in the attitude already described, his painted face expressing so comically the surprise he felt—his whole bearing—as, no doubt, was only natural—described in one word, "clownish." It was always said in the company that Jerry carried the business wherever he went, not intentionally, of course; he always declared that no one tried harder to be a gentleman, and, as he frankly owned, no one failed more signally in the attempt. He was a clown to the backbone, in spite of all he could do, and to tell the truth I believe he was secretly proud of the fact.

CHAPTER VII.

LIZETTE'S PROTECTOR.

THE following day it was officially announced by Mr Petman that Fraülein Hartzmann had been added to his list of artistes.

It was also whispered that Madame Petite had received notice to the effect that her services would be dispensed with, but whether there was any truth in this latter statement it was hard to say. No one was admitted into the secrets of the great manager, and the persons concerned kept their affairs to themselves.

Certain, however, it was, that later on, when the lady in question having recovered from her indisposition, her recovery was not looked upon by her devoted friend and admirer with the kindness one would have expected. As Will Breakneck expressed it, "It was easy to see that something was up with the pair." Epsom's manner was even more sulky and morose than usual, while the fancy rider appeared also very dull and dispirited. But to return to our heroine.

On entering the tent prior to the commencement of the performance, on the day following that on which she first so luckily was able to be of use to the mighty Petman, she found Jerry, whose show came early on the bill, already there, engaged, as was his custom, in preparing himself for his performance by practising a few of his tricks in a corner. On the young girl's entrance he ceased these and went to her side.

She greeted him as frankly as on the day before, and accepted his congratulations on her engagement, and until the time came for Jerry to follow Madame Petite into the ring, the two chatted away as agreeably as though they had known each other all their lives.

And this was my hero's first introduction to the girl who, as will be seen, had so great an influence on his after life.

When this influence first had birth it was difficult to say, but it certainly did arise, and lasted for as long as—but how long will be told later on.

As we have seen, by mere chance the acquaintance was made, an acquaintance which ripened into an actual friendship ere long.

How it happened, as I have said, Jerry even himself hardly knew. There was the chance meeting, when he, as he afterwards owned, had been fortunate enough to render her assistance, the lucky accident which had led to her engagement by the mighty Petman, her frank renewal of the acquaintance by selecting him for the cavalier of

the moment, followed by a daily meeting during performance, in which her winning, almost childlike, simplicity showed itself in contrast to the not too striking manners of many of those around her.

Yes, it was almost impossible to say how it began. Jerry never knew why it was that he got into the habit of wasting—(he called it so at first)—so much time after his performance ; he used to lounge about until Miss Hartzmann's turn was near, solely for the pleasure of wishing that young lady "good day," to inquire, after a removal from one town to the other, whether she had managed to find comfortable lodgings, to add a few remarks about the "house," and more often than not to drift into a light chat, in which he would exert himself to his utmost to be jolly, just for the sake of seeing the clear brown eyes sparkle and twinkle with fun, the prettiest little dimples in the world play round the girl's mouth, which, in her efforts to be serious, she would draw down in the gravest manner, until suddenly the dimples got it all their own way and ran riot to the accompaniment of the clearest, most silvery laugh that ever charmed mortal ears, to the exclusion of all, perhaps, wiser thoughts, for it did charm one of its hearers, until he grew to love the sight and sound so well that—that—he was never happy unless it were near.

But, as I have said, it was not all at once that this discovery was made ; it dawned upon Jerry by degrees, until the real truth of the whole matter was forced upon him.

It happened in this wise.

You see, as I have said, the little German girl had taken a great fancy to her rescuer, as she often called him, and as the months went by, so friendly did they become, that their relations assumed somewhat the warmth of brother and sister.

Not very long after Lizette had joined the company, Jerry, by a skilful manœuvre, arranged that he should, as he styled it, "clown her act," meaning by this that he should employ the intervals between her performance for his tricks.

His reason for so doing at the time was, that his opinion of the new fancy rider's prowess was such as, as he said, "to ensure the audience being in a good temper—a great thing for the success of his performance."

In time, however, this view of the transaction ceased to exist, for I am pretty well certain, had the general favour with which the said performance was looked upon been entirely withdrawn, he would have still retained his office.

It was curious to see how completely he took the young stranger under his wing; he was, the men often remarked, a good deal more concerned about her performance than his own, displaying the utmost anxiety until it was successfully concluded, watching the whole night after night, as though the agility and grace of the fairylike figure, in its dancing and bounding, never palled upon him.

He fell into the way of himself escorting her

into the ring, she, apparently, quite content, although this spoilt for him a good entrance in the way of a triple somersault, insisted—(an office which, until he resolutely asserted his right to it, was the cause of some contention among his companions, all, save George Epsom, who scowled and swore under his breath every time this display of homage was made)—in assisting her on to her charger, always sure to make the most of this opportunity to whisper some laughing remark in her ear, accompanying it by an encouraging squeeze of the little foot which, encased in the dainty white satin slipper, was entrusted to his hand.

Often during his tricks he would manage to say a word to her now and again, quite content with her quick answering nod and smile, while, after much awkward manœuvring to gain the desired permission, he was allowed to see the young lady to her lodgings; first as a great privilege now and then, but soon it became the regular thing for the faithful cavalier to await his mistress's coming outside the artistes' door, from whence the queer couple—the daintily brought-up girl, with her own frail beauty, and tastes and manners which, but for her self-instituted protector—now she had lost the one whom nature had given her—must have found the way of life rough and hard to travel now she journeyed alone—and the young clown, whose learning had been such as he could pick up from his companions, who could few of them boast of having

been to any better school; who had struggled for himself from childhood, although his reputation as the son of a "strong" man made him more kindly treated than would otherwise have been the case; who had seen too much of life to have many fancies left, if ever such a thing existed in the very matter-of-fact mind of the young acrobat.

Jerry's life had been a singularly sober-tinted, not to say dark one, without many gleams of light in it, and yet not all clouds; then had come this young stranger girl, and, on a sudden, there seemed to come a something into the grey gloom which altered the whole face of the earth, it seemed to him.

And this was how he found it out.

It was one very warm day in summer—for it took many months to ripen into friendship the singularly brought about acquaintance—the show was encamped in the little country town of Royston, where business for the past few days had been most flourishing.

It was Saturday, and the mighty Petman had spent fully an hour of the morning in swearing at the hot weather, which had suddenly set in, and threatened almost entirely to spoil the last show.

In spite, however, of this dismal foreboding on the part of the manager, at the hour of the performance the "house" was crowded to overflowing, not to say, suffocation, and the worthy magnate was thereby restored to his usual state of good humour.

It so happened that a few days before, Lizette Hartzmann had, during her performance, essayed a new trick which she had been wont to use with great success when, with her father, a member of the French Cirque.

In this, on her first attempt, she had, for want of practice, failed, but determined to regain her old knack, set herself to gain the required use to the "act."

It was after an unusually long practice that, issuing from the tent the little German girl met Jerry, who noticing she looked pale and somewhat tired, proposed a quiet walk before the night's show.

To this Lizette consented, and the two had strolled off in the direction of the country, leaving the hurry and bustle of the town far behind.

And here it was that Jerry first learnt what it was that had crept into his life and made it so sweet.

CHAPTER VIII.

DREAMS.

YES, it was during that quiet country ramble Jerry learnt what it was that had gradually crept into his life, and made it somehow so different to what it had been.

This was how it happened.

On quitting the circus ground, Jerry had inquired, "Where shall we go to?"

"Anywhere; I have no mind," replied his companion, whereupon he had nodded his head with a sage look on his face and said, "I know just the place to suit you. You're a bit tired, and the place I know of is just the one for a rest."

Accordingly he led the way through one or two narrow lanes and streets to the very outskirts of the town, and down the broad high road which leads to the country beyond. How delicious it was after the noise, hurry, and bustle of the town, with all its sights and sounds displeasing to eyes and ears, to roam lazily down the shady lanes,

one's senses cooled and refreshed by the rest and calm around.

To no one, perhaps, could this have been more grateful than Lizette Hartzmann—she who had been brought up in the midst of like scenes, until misfortune and trouble had fallen upon a hitherto happy home, and driven those who loved it out into the cold bare world to fight the battle of life for themselves.

It was of this—the change from what was to what had once been—that the little German girl spoke, as she and her companion strolled leisurely along under the welcome shade which some lane afforded.

It was strange to note how, though as a rule shy and reserved to the point of pride with most of those around her, Lizette was never so with Jerry. To him she was as open-hearted and frank as a child to one whom she feels she may love and trust. She told him all her troubles both in the past and present—these last, although she did not know it, were, thanks to his protecting care, not nearly as many as they might have been had she a less sturdy, less interested guardian; confided to him her hopes and fears, ever meeting with ready sympathy, for even if in her day dreams her delicate fancy led her sometimes, as Jerry expressed it, “a bit beyond him,” he always did his best to follow her out as best he could, while—the part which pleased Jerry most—she always openly acknowledged him as her chosen protector, if not exactly in words, by the simple con-

finding way in which she claimed that protection, which you may be sure he was only too ready to bestow.

To one of the young clown's nature, such an office is an only too grateful one. He had learnt in time to look upon it as his right, and one which no one should dare to question.

And Lizette, too, as I have said, seemed only too happy with the state of things. It may appear strange that one who, as I have said, was naturally so shy and timid, should of herself establish such relations upon a not so very long acquaintance, but the reason for it may have been this—until the death of her beloved father, in all her troubles she had had some one on whom to lean, some one to guide her, and when deprived of her wonted protector, it was but natural she should willingly allow any one so disposed to occupy the office. This, as we have seen, Jerry was only too happy to do.

Nor was this all. Their first meeting had, in a measure, made a bond of sympathy between them which every little kindly service of the young fellow's was constantly strengthening. And it might have been that it was what some of his "pals" called Jerry's "natural inclination to be useful," *i.e.*, unselfish would have been the proper word; but certainly he was always only too delighted to be useful to pretty little Lizette Hartzmann, into whose confidence he had stepped in such a very lucky manner.

Yes, he was lucky, very lucky, was the young

clown's inward comment as he walked along through the shady lanes. How some fellows would have envied him his pretty confiding little companion, with her quaint ways, her still more quaint broken English, above all, the simple child-like bearing which always distinguished her manner to this, her self-chosen protector.

The sight of the glorious country, as I have said, recalled to the little fancy rider sad yet sweet memories of the home which had once been hers. And as she walked, bit by bit she recalled the past, telling of a happy childhood, early blighted by a sudden storm, of trials and struggles bravely borne, till death had ended them for one poor soul, sick and weary of battling with the hard cruel world, in which only sorrow and sadness seemed to be his lot.

But Jerry would not let her dwell upon these sad thoughts too long. Gently he drew her attention to other things, strove by every means in his power to make the gladness of the present make the sorrow of the past forgotten. And he succeeded. Under the influence of his cheery manner, Lizette soon forgot her troubles, and became as light-hearted and merry as he could have wished.

And in her gay moods, when happiness filled her heart, no one in all the world, to Jerry's mind, could have been more winsome, more winning than this little German girl.

So down the lanes these two strangely assorted companions passed, Lizette making the echoes ring with the sound of her silvery laugh at the

young clown's tricks, tales, and jokes, he exerting himself to the utmost to please her, that his ears might drink in eagerly the sound which, because it told of another's happiness of his causing, he loved to hear.

And every now and then Lizette's quick eye would discern in the hedges on either side, or in the fields through which they walked, a blossom or flower which struck her fancy. Breaking off in one of her quaintly-worded sentences she would fly to possess herself of it, each successive "find" in her eyes more precious, till she had loaded herself with all sorts of treasures, such as one who sees little of the delights of the country knows how to appreciate.

Jerry was indefatigable in his endeavours to discover for her new wonders—nearly frightened her out of her wits by presenting her with a tiny frog, despoiled the hedges for her with a ruthless hand, goodness knows how many times ran the danger of being prosecuted for trespass—what did he care, so long as the results of his venture procured some fresh treasure for his delighted companion, for which he would be thanked by a radiant smile and eager thanks.

As Lizette told him, since he had left the town behind him he seemed to have taken to him the habits of a monkey; he scrambled over gates and fences, leaped ditches in a manner which caused many a cry of fear from Lizette lest he should come to grief. He conceived the idea of making a bird's-egg necklace for her, but on discovering

his intention she stoutly declared she would never wear it.

“To take the birds’ eggs from them is cruel; you shall not do it, I tell you. I will go straight home at once, and never, never speak to you again—never again.”

This threat had the effect of inducing Jerry to abandon his idea, rather reluctantly it must be confessed. But he was rewarded for his obedience, and Lizette for her care for the feathered songsters, for while rummaging a bank for some sweet wild roses, what should he find hanging to a briar but a splendid string of the desired eggs, no doubt dropped by some less conscientious bird-nester.

This he insisted upon hanging round Lizette’s neck, declaring the fairies must have made it for her, so she must not risk offending their elfish majesties by refusing to accept of it. So, of course, on these conditions, Lizette took possession of the treasures. And then once when, in spite of the usual caution concerning trespassers displayed in large letters just above his head, Jerry was with right good will robbing—a crime made necessary by an incautiously-uttered wish of Lizette’s—a corn-field of a handful of golden grain, an old farmer, with a sour-looking face and a harsh voice pounced down upon him, caught him in the very act, and asked him wrathfully what he meant.

Jerry, with a face of sublime innocence, declared he was very sorry, but he couldn’t read, it wasn’t his fault if his education had been

neglected. The corn was the finest he'd seen in all England that year, and he couldn't resist having an ear or two of it—it was a lovely crop, etc. So he went on, slyly complimenting and wheedling, until it ended by the old farmer, instead of prosecuting the trespasser, inviting him and his companion into the dairy, where he regaled them with glasses of rich, creamy milk, and such snowy bread and golden butter, as Jerry said, made one hungry to look at.

The old man having proved in such an acceptable and substantial manner that his bark was worse than his bite, the two travellers set off on their way once more.

During their further peregrinations, showing a lamentable example of how leniency towards vice is apt to encourage it, Jerry made a second diversion from the path of rightness—otherwise that of a corn field—to secure some unusually brilliant poppies.

While thus unlawfully engaged, he descried a second sturdy farmer coming in his direction; with all speed he sprang up a tree near at hand, from which elevated position he calmly watched the outraged proprietor of the field searching about for any sign of the trespasser, failing to find which he muttered something about “giving it him if he did catch him,” and retired.

The coast being clear, Jerry returned to *terra firma* once more, and boldly presented Lizette with the coveted flowers.

At length, however, Jerry, very unwillingly it

must be confessed, declared it time to be making for home, if either of them intended to appear at that evening's performance,

"Must we to then turn back ;" said Lizette regretfully, clasping her hands, and looking round her with eyes which rested lovingly on the peaceful scene around ; " must we to go back ? "

" I am afraid we must," said Jerry ; " we have been two hours and a-half getting here, and as the show begins at seven, and it is now four o'clock, we have but just time. The guv'nor will cut up rough if we are late. I can't afford to be in his bad books."

" You would never be in any one's bad books, you know that," said Lizette. " Ah, well ! I suppose that we must to go, since that you say so ; but I wish we could go on walking for always."

" Are you not tired, then ? "

" Yes, my body is tired, but my heart is so happy I have not thought of it before."

" But you are tired, nevertheless. Then I'll tell you what we'll do. You see those dog daisies ? " Lizette looked up the bank, at the foot of which they stood, uttered a cry of delight at the sight of the mass of golden-centred flowers, but suppressed discreetly a wish for some.

Jerry, however, read her thoughts ; he continued, " You see that big stone yonder under the trees. Now you are to sit down there quietly and rest, while I see if any of those flowers are to be had for the climbing."

So saying he sprang up the bank, and was soon

busy robbing it of its treasures, delaying as long as possible, that Lizette might be well rested. At last, however, he deemed it advisable to make a start, and prepared to descend the bank. Before doing so he paused, with his arms full of the daisies, and looked round him, smiling to himself as he recalled Lizette's words, "my body is tired but my heart is happy. I wish we could go on walking so for ever."

As he did so, an object in the distance moving towards him, caught his eye.

It was an empty hay cart.

"A bright idea," muttered Jerry; "just the very thing."

Forthwith he sprang along the bank, and met the cart just as it was about to turn off in a cross direction to where they were.

A few words with the man, seconded by a coin, and Jerry went running along the bank to where, at the foot of the bank, the flutter of a pale blue dress told him where Lizette was.

As he ran he called to her, but she made no answer, and he suddenly ceased calling and stole gently towards where an old grey milestone had fallen from its upright position to the road, and thus made a capital resting-place. So Lizette seemed to have found it, and as he drew near Jerry could not but pause a moment to admire the pretty picture which lay before him.

The girl was sitting on the old grey stone leaning slightly backwards against the bank, her hands crossed idly in her lap, upon which lay the

most precious of her treasures, among them bright poppies, at her feet a huge bunch of many-coloured field flowers—clover, ragged robin, milk-maid, and such like,—all showing up in contrast to the simple pale blue cotton dress she wore, a narrow frill of lace at throat and wrists, cheap, but clean and neat; her hat, which in mischief Jerry had stuck all over with gaudy poppies, lying beside her; her bare head resting back against the grassy bank behind; the sunbeams glancing through the trees above flitting noiselessly around her, playing among the soft brown curls which had fallen back from the low, clear forehead, and silently, saucily kissing the pretty face beneath—a face flushed and bright with happiness—the sweet brown eyes half hidden beneath the sweeping lashes, soft and tender with something more than content.

Yes, it was a pretty picture—so Jerry thought—so pretty that, despite a promise that he had made but a few moments before about not being long, for fully five minutes he stood before it unwilling to wake it to life.

And so he stood and gazed until he forgot it was a pretty picture—forgot how time passed—forgot everything save a dim consciousness that what he saw had raised a strange sensation within him he had never felt before, a sensation he could not describe, could not name.

It was but for a few seconds he stood thus. Then a loud, gruff “Hullo there!” broke the spell, and Jerry woke to the fact that he had been day dreaming.

Lizette started up too. Her dream of home was o'er, but she had dreamt it often, very often before, while Jerry had never in his life even in sleep realised such thoughts as had filled his mind for that brief moment. But there it was but one moment. The next he was bidding Lizette gather up her flowers and see the surprise he had in store for her.

It was only that he had managed to persuade the waggoner to give them a lift back to town, but Lizette owned it was the best surprise she could have had just then. She was more tired than she had cared to own.

But would you believe it, Jerry, most incomprehensible fellow, tired as he also was with his long tramp and extra exertion in the way of climbing and trespassing, more than repented having solicited the kindness of the waggoner. He owned to himself he would willingly have trudged twice the distance to have been able during the journey to—but there, Jerry did not own to himself what the real end of that journey was to be, and so I am not at liberty to pry into his secrets.

Mind you, he did not wish to go alone. Oh, no. Lizette must go with him, for company's sake of course. But what about the gov'nor's anger then? "A fig for that!" I think would have been Jerry's reply had any one put the question to him; "there is something more important on hand than his temper." He might have said, "my life's happiness," but he didn't. So no one so much as suggested that the length of the walk should

be doubled, and Jerry was too much dazed to suggest it himself.

Instead of that, in answer to the waggoner's impatient "Hullo there!" which so summarily dispelled his dreams, he led the way to where the hay cart stood waiting, assisted Lizette to her seat beside the driver, placed her treasures at her feet and climbed in behind himself, having for his seat the broad ledge which ran along the side of the cart.

And so they started. Curious to state, during the whole of the drive home, in spite of his half-formed inward wish concerning the lengthening of the walk, Jerry scarcely spoke excepting when Lizette addressed him. And even then she had more than once to repeat her question before she received any answer.

Plainly Jerry had got a thoughtful mood on him, which was strange after his late gaiety.

He wondered afterwards if Lizette noticed it, but concluded that as she had made no remark she had not done so.

No doubt she was thinking of other things, and besides, her attention was engaged by the old waggoner. He had appeared a little taciturn and surly at first at having been kept waiting, but he must have a hard heart indeed to have been able to resist the sunnyness, if I may use the word, which the traveller at his side bestowed upon him.

Lizette would take no grunts or surly nods; she asked so many questions in her queer broken

English, looking up so inquiringly into his face with her sweet brown eyes, that the old man quite forgot to be disagreeable, and proved himself both a genial companion as well as a kind-hearted friend. Jerry being in the back of the cart was thus shut out from the conversation, but I fear he would not have taken much part in it if he had not been.

He was thinking deeply, so deeply, that when the waggoner at length came to a standstill he did not notice that the journey was at an end until a peal of laughter in Lizette's silvery tones roused him.

She was standing looking at him from over the box seat, and evidently his attitude had struck her as being somewhat comical. And certainly he did not present such a pretty picture as Lizette had done not half-an-hour before.

He was sitting drumming softly with his heels against the waggon, for as the sides of the cart were high, and our hero, as I have said, was by no means tall, his legs dangled, in itself a not too graceful position, his hands rammed most resolutely into the depth of his pockets; he wore a suit of clothes of not too fashionable cut—at least so they appeared on his rather stout figure—their colour a shade between brown and grey; his hat tilted to the back of his head, and his necktie twisted to somewhere the region of his right ear, into which organ it seemed to be vainly endeavouring to pry.

This last was the most important fact of all, for

it was unanimously declared by his friends that the position of this article of the young clown's wearing apparel was a certain indication of the condition of the owner's, or rather wearer's mind. By it one could safely determine whether he was low spirited: this when the crimson-green, sky-blue, or yellow bow lay peacefully reposing beneath his chin—a very rare occurrence; mildly cheerful when it struck one as being a little displaced; if jolly, it made violent efforts to reach the position already described, but rarely reached it, for then it was whispered that something very serious indeed must be up with old Jer. It meant his excitement was over and he was calm. That state of calm meant to Jerry some great inward agitation which was beyond all outward expression.

And as I have said, on the day in question the symbolising necktie had reached the left ear, and Jerry was calm. What would have been the result had the somnambulistic state lasted for any greater length of time, I tremble to think; the treacherous green bow might have got beyond the left crimson oracle, and then—but no; that period, that stage of the disease is too dreadful to be contemplated.

Thank Heaven it was averted. And how? By none other than Lizette's burst of silver laughter; that sound was the charm to break the spell.

Yes, the end of it all was, Jerry woke to find himself the object of Lizette's merriment. It might have been that she herself was so far away from his thoughts that he did not even know what it

was that recalled him to consciousness ; much as a patient does not at the moment of revival feel the pain of the medicine which has called him back to life, does not know how great was the pain inflicted by the cruel instrument that cut into his flesh, until the wound itself is healing ; but certain it is that the little German girl's merriment did not jar upon the listener's ear at the moment ; if it inflicted a wound, he did not know it till afterwards.

No ; he certainly saw no sting in the clear tones, and read no evil intent in the face which, so full of fun, looked across at him, divided by the pile of wildflowers at her feet—flowers which were bright and beautiful, but scarce one of them without a thorn or some poison hidden beneath their loveliness.

Lizette's words, too—contrasting with a picture which was then occupying all his thoughts—conveyed no hidden meaning in their gaiety.

“ Oh, Jerry, Jerry,” she said, if you could but see how you are yourself.”

And then she laughed again, clasping her hands, her face rippling over with smiles, till the old waggoner joined in her merriment, saying, in rather a different tone to that in which he had answered her first question,

“ Lor, missy, he's been having a doze.”

By this time Jerry had roused himself a bit, and seeming to catch the infection, laughed heartily himself too ; not because he had the least idea how absurd he looked, but because Lizette laughed,

and somehow when she laughed, even at him—at least, he thought so then—he could not but be happy, because she was happy.

At last, however, the striking of a church-clock in the town—they were only then on the outskirts, that being as far as the friendly waggoner was able to oblige them with a lift—recalled the three merry-makers to a sense of how late it was.

Five o'clock. The old cart-horse had not come at racing speed over the few miles, and the two travellers at least had quite another half-hour's walk before them; they were both of them hungry, neither having provided for their excursion, which was purely impromptu, and the farmer's kindly offered lunch was the only meal they had eaten since breakfast. Thus tea had to be eaten, and if possible, a little rest would certainly impart to the rather tired pair a little necessary freshness for their exertions in the ring. The sound, therefore, of the chiming of the clock brought the two back to sober common sense again.

Jerry jumped off his perch, took his hands from his pockets, restored his hat with great precision to its proper position, gave his tie a vicious tug, which only succeeded in transferring it from the neighbourhood of one ear to that of the opposite one, and springing from the waggon, prepared to assist Lizette to alight.

The old waggoner was, however, before him; rather silly of him to attempt to spring a young girl from such a height, thought Jerry.

You're very considerate about the old man's

health all of a sudden, Jerry. One would have imagined that little Lizette was somewhat of a heavy build, instead of the fragile fairy she—Hullo! Who said she was a fairy? Compliments between old friends are forbidden, Mr Jerry.

But to return.

After thanking the waggoner warmly for his kindness, shaking him heartily by the hand, our hero and heroine prepared to continue their journey on foot.

Just, however, as they were starting, with many hopes from their late charioteer for a meeting at some distant period, Jerry conceived the brilliant idea of inviting him to visit the show.

"Look here, Joe," he said, slapping him on the back cheerily; "what time do you leave work?"

"I've oundly got just a load of corn to droive down to the farm, and then I've done for to-day."

"And where do you live?"

"Over yonder," pointing with his whip towards some low white cottages standing a little distance farther up the high road.

"Well, look here; have you ever seen a circus?"

"A circus—is it an animal, sir? I can't say as I knows it."

"No, it's not an animal, Joe; it's a show with horses and ladies and gentlemen performing."

"Ah! I knows the koind of thing; my young grandson Jack went once, and for nigh a week after he was clean daft about the grand things he'd seen; used to spend all his days riding Dobbin round and round the yard until the hoss

threw him into the pond ; then he gave up those tricks and used to spend all his time a-throwing himself into all manner of hattitudes, as he called them, looked to me mighty like trying to twist every limb in his body, while as for standing on his head, it's my wonder he hasn't died of fits twenty times over. You'd see him a-sitting as mute as a raven one minute, and if you looked away there he'd be upside down, as red as his best Sunday tie ; you never know'd whether you'd find him the right way up or not. I told his mother as how he wouldn't know that himself if she let him go on, but she wouldn't listen to me until one morning I found him, upside down, of course, a-trying to eat his breakfast, just as if, after all the schooling he's had he oughtn't to know as how he hadn't only one digestion, and that worn't in his forehead—which it might as well have been, for he hadn't no brains there—eating his breakfast on his head, and stuck me out that if only he could manage to eat a pound of pickled pork and half-a-pound of plum pudding in that position as how his fortune 'd be made. Fortune, indeed ! I think it's a shame to let boys as is only sons of widows into such shows."

"You're not the only son of a widow, are you, Joe?" asked Jerry, seizing a pause which the vehemence of his last remark made necessary to the old man.

"Lor', no, sir ; my mother had ten of us, and she's been dead this twenty years."

"Then I suppose you'd not take it as an offence

if I ask you to come and see our show. You know King Street? You come to-night round to the door of the big tent pitched on the green opposite the 'White Bear,' and I'll be on the watch for you and see you get a good seat. Will you come?"

"Lor' bless you, sir, I'd like it dearly, but—" and Joe shuffled uneasily from one foot to another, and plucked at the cord of his whip.

"But what? Out with it, my good man. What's the trouble?"

But Joe was evidently loath to give the name to his difficulty.

"I know," said Lizette, after a moment; "you said, Jerry, 'Joe, you come'—you forgot that Mrs Joe—"

"That's just it, missie, only I didn't like to name it, for fear of offending you. You see, me and my old missus has been married this four-and-forty years, and we ain't had so much as a high word yet, and if I goes to this show without her maybe she'll think I'm off what Jack calls gallivanting, and I shouldn't like for that to make the first onpleasantness."

"Right you are, Joe, to speak your mind. I hope when I'm married my wife and I will be as happy as you and yours."

As he spoke Jerry stole a cautious glance at Lizette, why cautious it is difficult to say, as it was not necessarily so, Lizette being busily engaged in tying up her cherished bouquet, guarding with special care the marguerites, sud-

denly grew very red in the face, cleared his throat, gave his necktie an admonitory tug, thereby checking its growing inclination this time to the locality of his right ear, and once more shaking the waggoner by the hand, said heartily,—

“Bring your old woman, by all means, Joe, and Jack and his mother, too, if you like, and we’ll show her we can do something better than stand on our heads.”

With this parting injunction the trio parted company, Joe to drop in at his queer little cottage home and throw that homestead into a perfect fever of excitement by the announcement that he was that evening going to conduct the whole family to that scene of delights of which Jack still retained dear and cherished memories. Oh, to see the hurry and bustle consequent upon the receipt of grandad’s news. Grandma, just in the middle of a six weeks’ wash, literally up to her elbows in suds—an imposing ceremony which she always maintained nothing short of an earthquake should prevent her from completing when once commenced—actually turned down her sleeves on the spot and desired her handmaid to rake out the copper fire, this occasion being in her eyes, no doubt, a greater one than even an earthquake itself, declared she would not rub, nay, so much as wring a single towel more, and devoted the next hour and a half to laying out with reverent hands her own and good man’s best Sunday-going clothes. The widow wiped away a tear in

honour of the occasion, this being the first time since her husband had departed this life that she had indulged in any amusement, and Jack, overcome with joy that his dream of a second visit to the alluring delights of the wonderful circus was to be realised, stood on his head for fully five minutes, much to the alarm of his relatives, who implored him in tears to, as his grandfather expressed it—keep the right way up—which he was at length prevailed to do by a threat of being left at home from the show.

Jerry meanwhile hurried Lizette through the streets back into the town, and saw her safely to the door of her lodgings.

Here he lingered on the steps, charging her to have a good tea and try to get a good rest afterwards.

“I mustn’t have you looking pale and tired to-night, or the boss will blame me for spoiling his pet artiste.”

The little figure on the steps above him was certainly somewhat travel-stained and dusty, but the face which looked down at him from over the screen of wild flowers was bright and happy.

“I will look my best to please you to-night, for you have been so kind to care for me so much. It has been a happy day for me.”

“So kind to care for me. Made me happy.” Why at those few simple words of thanks did the young clown’s face flush suddenly, a sudden light, bright, yet soft and tender, gleam in his grey-green eyes which transformed his face and

made its plainness forgotten? Why did his hand close over the little white fingers within his clasp with such sudden fervour?

Why did his lips tremble as they framed a short sentence? Why should those words be stayed? Why? Ah, why? The apparent reason was the appearance of two prying eyes on the other side of the street. It was the ring-master; he raised his hat, bowed stiffly, and passed on, but e'er he had removed his gaze, Lizette had withdrawn her hand from the one that held it, nodded a gay good-bye for now, and Jerry was left alone standing on the steps.

CHAPTER IX.

REALITY.

IT was a little later on in the same day as of that eventful excursion among the country lanes, and once more we are back in the busy town again with all its hurry and bustle, once more among the tents and such-like properties of the mighty show of the mightier Petman. The evening show is going on, as is evinced by the sound of gay music which comes from the huge ring tent, as it is called, interrupted now and again—and this not unfrequently, for the “house” is a capital one, both from a financial and appreciative point of view—by loud and prolonged bursts of applause.

Half the programme was already over, and it was the interval, as was evinced by the hum of many voices which now rises instead of the music, while from out the tent a stream of thirsty souls flows rapidly in the direction of the “White Bear,” where half-pints and two pennyworths are drained in feverish haste lest the thirsty one should not return in time to fight for his seat before the remainder of the performance com-

mences. Meanwhile, it is with the performers, not the audience, that we have to do. The ante-room is at first deserted, save for two of the grooms who are laughing and talking in one corner. And having once more introduced my reader behind the scenes, as it were, I am reminded that in detailing how affairs had progressed with my heroine in her private life, I have given no account of how she prospered in her professional capacity. There is not much to tell, saving that she did prosper.

Her act was always favourably, nay, generally, more than well received, more than once declared to be the most dainty performance of the whole troupe; for somehow there was an air of quiet gentility about the childish figure in its simple modest dresses which struck one forcibly after the not too refined appearance and performances of most of the rest of the company. This especially in contrast to Madame Fourteenstone and her clumsy attempts at leaps and such-like performances, for which she had certainly neither the figure nor agility for such.

It was a marvel in the company that Madame F.'s services, as they were contemptuously called, were retained, until one of the grooms having become disabled for a week, owing to the lady in question alighting from her steed in what was meant to be a flying jump, having landed on his toe, Jerry quietly suggested that no doubt her presence was intended to give weight to the performance, which assertion no one ventured to cry down.

Madame declared herself to have a supreme contempt for the "child," meaning Lizette, that were entering the company, but though, had she had an opportunity, she might, as Jerry said, have showed her teeth, that gentleman saw that she did not bite, and Lizette scarcely knew of her rival's hatred. For the rest, most of the company treated the little German girl civilly enough. Jerry's protectorship ensured her this, added to which, when not too nervous to be too shy and reserved, her companions found the little fancy rider to be both pleasant and genial.

There was a quiet simplicity and earnestness about her which unconsciously quenched all little jealousies which might have arisen, and won her her way, if not into all hearts, at least all the good graces, if some of them possessed any at all, of those around her. Yes, she was acknowledged to be a gracious little lady (even in the name there was a tinge of respect which argued well for the owner's standing) by her fellow workers save one. That one, of course, George Epsom.

The jockey never forgave Lizette the fright her first appearance had given him, lest it should bring about the dismissal of his devoted slave and admirer, even when his fears proved to be groundless.

It might have been that he had within him the remembrance of having planned a cowardly, mean trick, which had completely failed, and which, if she had been quick enough to discover it, would not raise him in her eyes.

Like Madame Fourteenstone he dared not show his spite, but he reserved it for some future period. His feeling was in no way enhanced by the remembrance that Lizette had been a witness of his brutal conduct towards the unlucky Smith, some version of which having reached the ring-master's ears, he had coolly informed the coward that if he behaved so a second time, nothing should prevent the whole affair being laid before the manager, who, much as he might dislike to dismiss so valuable an artist, would be forced, for common justice' sake, to take some means of preventing his indulging any further in giving vent to his rage upon those around him. Added to this, Lizette unconsciously widened the breach by, in so much as it lay in her power, befriending the same unlucky groom.

Her woman's heart had been first horrified at the way he had been treated, then touched by the sight of the ugly wound which for weeks disfigured his face, a feeling which soon ripened into soft pity at the many hard knocks which fell to his share. It was only by little ways that she could show her sympathy, but, dull as the wretched groom was ordinarily, he was not slow to interpret the timid, half-shy greetings, which were never forgotten, to him, no matter how many above him claimed the young artiste's attention—the few kindly words in passing—a gay nod—an appeal to him for some little service instead of to others, who might perhaps have filled the office far better, but which he rendered to the best of

his power only too eagerly, nay gratefully—and such like little acts of unspoken sympathy from a kind, gentle heart. Strangely enough, though as a rule tutored in her likes and dislikes by her strange lover—little else, in fact, than a reflection of his feelings—Madame Petite, though openly obliged to affect at least indifference, was in private by no means hostile to her rival.

The little woman was, after all, weak but not vicious ; and it might have been that, as she said, the sight of little Lizette's bright face and childish figure recalled to her remembrances of what she had once been—that these remembrances warmed some empty corner of her old heart into at least a friendly feeling towards the little German girl.

It was Jerry's private opinion that, in spite of age and the ravages of time, which might have made her inclined to be spiteful to others more fortunate than herself, there was still in the old woman an instinctive love of what was beautiful—that is, of what was young, fresh, and fair.

Be this as it may, from some cause Madame early chose an opportunity of privately evincing her real feelings to Lizette—who was at first a little shy at responding—but after a time gratefully accepted the little services which were so fearfully yet eagerly tendered.

I may mention that on the day on which I write, while Lizette was carrying out Jerry's injunction to have a good tea, she received a visit from the little French lady, who had stolen out

unknown to her jailor lover, who would certainly have prevented her going had he known her errand, to impart to her little friend the great news of a rumour which had reached her ears, to the effect that a certain manager of a certain circus—mightier even than the mighty Petman—had announced his intention of visiting the show that evening. Now, it was also secretly whispered that this mighty manager was about to start a show in London, which was to outshine even that with which they had to do—that for the purpose of engaging the most competent artists he was travelling from show to show—if any artist struck his fancy bargaining for him or her with the artist himself—not much haggling on this side, you may be sure, for the chance of a London engagement was too great an opportunity to be passed lightly over, even though it might entail harder work, and in many cases half of an already poor salary—as some never-despairing artist remarked, the glory of being able to write after one's name the proud announcement, "Mr So-and-so, of the Royal Spangle and Glitter Theatre, London," compensated for all the rest.

So Madame Petite seemed to think, for it was with the greatest excitement she imparted the said news of the coming of the manager who was to open for some lucky individual in the company the golden prospect—the long-dreamt-of London engagement.

"I thought that you might like to know, so that you could make the best of the opportunity.

It is lucky; did you not tell me you would try some new feat to-night?"

"Yes, I did so intend," said Lizette, "but I have decided to wait till to-morrow."

"Why for, you silly child? It is the very thing. If you are successful, think, the *Monsieur* may engage you for *Londres*."

"But I have no great wish for to get there," said Lizette, calmly arranging her flowers in a soup plate she had wheedled from the landlady for the purpose. "I am happy here with them all. Why should I want to go?"

"But who knows, *enfant*, what salary he may not give you?"

"I have enough now, and sometimes I squeeze something to keep for a day when it rains," was Lizette's reply. "Besides, what would a few shillings more be to me if I had no friends to be happy with as I am now?"

"*Mon enfant! comme tu es drôle. Tu parles comme la petite bébé que tu es.* I say to you, you are silly. *Il faut que vous*—that you take this chance; you shall do the new feat, and look your very best to-night. Care you to do it?"

"For the first, yes, if you say I must, but I see not the why for it; for the second I cannot answer, I will wear my best robe—mauve."

The little woman shrugged her shoulders.

"It is pretty and *très* becoming, but it is not fresh! You have none other. It is a pity, you will lose the chance."

In spite of Lizette's assurance that the old one

would do very well, this obstacle, the want of a suitable dress, was bemoaned by Madame for fully ten minutes. At the end of that time she became endued with a sudden bright idea, with which she was so enchanted that she forgot it was her supposed rival for whom she was exerting herself, and set out with right good will to help her in every way to make the most of her "chance."

The working out of her idea, however, required some time, and thus, when a little before the interval was over, Jerry appeared in the ante-room, himself a little late, just because he wished to be, if anything, the reverse, he was surprised and I verily believe not a little disappointed to find Lizette was not as usual already there.

He had a half-formed wish that he should have had an opportunity to say a word to her before the performance commenced. What the few words were to be he was not quite certain. I suppose it was some direction relating to her new "feat."

The second part of the programme began as usual with the Japanese children, who, punctual to the sound of the first call bell, were severally dragged and pushed on by their respective parents. Lizette's act, clowning by Jerry, came second on the list.

The second bell rang, the band struck up, the London manager, after submitting to be treated by Mr Petman in that worthy's private apartment, returned to his seat among the audience, and the performance commenced.

Still Lizette did not make her appearance, much to Jerry's uneasiness. He marched up and down the tent with the huge frill which he wore round his neck sticking up viciously on each side, and casting every moment anxious glances at the door of the tent.

The Japanese children had well-nigh finished, and by that time Jerry was roused to such a pitch of excitement that it was with difficulty he was prevented from rushing, dressed as he was, to her lodgings to ascertain the cause of her non-appearance, while in one corner Epsom secretly rejoiced at the prospect of some trouble in store for the young fancy rider, wishing that Madame Petite had been there to share his joy—not knowing how she was at that moment engaged. But he was the only one who entertained such feelings; the rest of the company shared Jerry's excitement, showing it in various ways.

Will Breakneck had dressed early in order to put a new rope to one of the supports of his bar, but declared he'd rather let the blessed thing alone and break his neck—namely, by taking Lizette's turn—than that she should get into trouble for keeping the ring waiting.

Signor Patchouli, one of whose trained horses, by-the-bye, had been allotted to the new-comer, instead of the not too good-tempered Emperor, declared he'd rather some one should lame one of his thoroughbreds than that Bella Signorina should miss her opportunity that night, while poor Smith, the groom, in his excitement, gave

the said trained steed such a rubbing down that it is a wonder the poor animal had any coat left at all.

Two messages had already been sent to the dressing-room, and received the same answer—Fräulein Hartzmann was coming in one moment; but the moment had come when she ought to have made her appearance in the ring, and she had not arrived. The ring-master appeared in the ante-room and learnt the news.

“You had better go on then,” he said to the Breaknecks. “Miss Hartzmann should be to time.”

“It’s all right, she’s coming,” said Smith, rushing in from a self-imposed visit to make further inquiries.

“All right,” said Jerry; “I’ll have my show first, but send her on quick,” and, without waiting to be gainsaid, he gave the signal for the band, and one—two—three doubles and he was in the ring up to his tricks and jokes, making the house echo with the laughter his fun provoked.

He had only, however, indulged them a few moments when the band struck up, the trained steed, all the better for the energy Smith had devoted to it, was led into the ring, followed by the signor, who had early claimed the privilege of whipping for the neatest and prettiest rider in the show. The next moment the curtains were drawn aside, and, conducted by the young ring-master, the truant rider skipped gracefully into the ring.

One glimpse at her explained the delay.

Under the skilful hands of the good-natured little Frenchwoman, the little fancy rider made her appearance before the mighty London manager in just the prettiest costume one could ever imagine.

It fairly took Jerry's breath away. And yet there was not so much in it after all, only snowy skirts of purest white, a dainty white satin body with soft white lace, and over it all in long wreaths, placed with skilful hands, garlands of scarlet poppies, a few skilfully arranged in the pretty brown curls. But there was something so fresh and fair about the whole that no wonder it pleased the eye so well.

How Jerry wished he had been able to have been the one to have led her on into the ring. As it was, only a bright nod fell to his share, and Lizette began her performance.

This, as usual, was a decided success, the new feat eliciting roars of applause, even the London manager nodded approvingly, while a certain old man, who, in a well-preserved suit of black, with two ladies in unmistakably Sunday "gets-up," as Jerry called them, and a small and very precocious boy of about nine years old, occupied a conspicuous position in the front of the reserved seats, was so overcome by the grace and agility of the little rider that, in the midst of a breathless silence, he gave vent to his feelings by a hearty "Lor' bless her, who'd have thought she could do that?"

This frankly-uttered opinion caused a general laugh, in which Lizette herself joined, and recognising the obliging waggoner of the afternoon nodded gaily to him; indeed, would have kissed her hand, but was deterred from so doing by the remembrance that there hadn't been a wry word yet, and Joe's missus might look upon the act as Joe's gallivanting.

Joe's missus, however, was too much taken up in calling her good man to order to notice much else.

"Where's your manners, Joe Andrews?" she said reprovingly; "you'll have the young gentleman as gave us these seats a-wishing he'd let you stay outside, and I wouldn't have missed seeing his tricks for my best pebble brooch, as has been in the family for nigh forty years. He'll be put out for certain."

But the good lady's mind was soon set easy on that score, for would you believe it, while Lizette, in answer to loud applause, was repeating one of her tricks, Jerry slyly made his way out of the ring, and when his turn came for more tricks, there he was sitting calmly chatting away to the old waggoner and his family.

Then what fun it was. When the ring-master sternly called upon him to come and go through his performance, he announced that the young gentleman, namely Joe's grandson, would take his place; how the old couple laughed at the boy's discomfiture, loudly calling him to go and distinguish himself, till, having shaken hands with

all of them, Jerry sprang back into the ring, and went about his mad tricks again.

I may here note that the young clown's affability made such an impression upon Joe's missus that Joe was heard to declare in secret that he hoped she worn't going to be struck with him like Jack, a contingency which fortunately did not occur.

But to come back to our heroine. Her performance over, Jerry had the honour of leading her into the green-room tent, where, however, she was so freely complimented and congratulated on all sides that Jerry could scarcely get a word with her.

"Never mind," he thought, "we shall go home together."

But that night, the first for many, he did not do so.

In spite of the approving nod at Lizette's performance, Lizette was not summoned to the London manager's presence. Though, of course, not wishing to stand in the way of her advancement, etc., Mr Petman very unselfishly placed such obstacles in the way of his losing his best fancy rider that, beyond the nod already mentioned, she got no further recognition of her performance.

No, the only one chosen for a London engagement was none other than our friend Jerry.

The manager sent for him just as he was about to see Lizette as usual safely to her lodgings—a task which, very reluctantly it must be confessed, he was compelled to resign to the signor—and

would you believe it, when the offer of the advancement was made him he actually hesitated; and even after he had agreed to accept it—he was told to be ready to start early the following morning for the capital—instead of congratulating himself on his luck, he regretted that he had not made an opportunity that same evening to say those few words to Lizette.

Never mind, he would pay her a visit early in the morning and make this important communication.

But when the morning came and he paid the promised visit, he found Madame had dropped in to breakfast with Lizette, and the fact of her presence, I suppose, drove the intended words from our hero's head, for he said his adieux and started by the express without having given them utterance.

If he had only known the mischief of delays. But there, he thought perhaps it would be better to wait till he returned. So he waited.

CHAPTER X.

COMPATRIOTS.

AND so Jerry waited—true, it wasn't very long he had to do so—but some one says, “delays are dangerous,” and the wisdom of this saying our hero had to learn to his cost.

The London engagement came to an abrupt end, like most only too delightful dreams. The awakening from the delusion was in this case as pleasant as it usually is. The young clown's return to consciousness, so to speak, in company with the rest of those who had accepted with avidity the offer of the promotion to a grand city show, from their not too great elevation, was to find that once again they are to see their hopes dashed to the ground, they once more the victims of a snare and deception; in plain words, the grand London show, as the company expressed it, went to “smash,” the manager disappeared, taking with him all the bright visions of the future he had held out to all engaged in the glorious scheme—and, what was more to the point, all the avail-

able, not to say stray, cash, which naturally rendered the immediate winding up of the affair—a course which, with his last good-bye, he, the missing manager, heartily recommended to the next in command—a matter of no very great duration.

Cut no doubt to the heart by the knowledge of how his trust and hope in mankind had been betrayed, the retired greengrocer, who, with a laudable desire to be connected with the great and glorious profession, had been induced to invest all his little savings in the concern, for the proud privilege of seeing his name on the bill as assistant manager, certainly set about winding up affairs in a very business-like manner, and one which was at least conclusive if hardly courteous.

After the twenty-eighth performance, when to fill the house the whole of the greengrocer's family had had to be installed in the one row of reserved seats, with instructions to spread out as much as possible—a direction scarcely necessary in the case of the spouse of the worthy assistant manager, who being naturally inclined to be somewhat *embonpoint*, usually found one chair insufficient to support her somewhat massive figure. (I may say that this worthy lady had only one eye, but even with that she did not look favourably upon this dazzling circus scheme; she could, she always declared, see twice as well with her "one fixed and one revolver," as her youngest hopeless called her two orbs—namely, the one provided by nature and the other bestowed by art—as her husband

could with his own two watery blue ones), it was, I say, after the twenty-eighth performance of the grand show that the assistant manager, somewhat less dignified in manner and more thick in utterance than was his wont, assembled in the manager's private room all the members of his company, and somewhat curtly and abruptly informed them, in not too polite, but at the same time very expressive language, that "the blooming shoot was a sell; it wasn't no use trying to disguise the fact—the whole affair was a sell, and the sooner everybody cut the better it'd be for 'em."

The company, however, did not seem inclined to take the hint; certain unmistakable signs, expressive of disapprobation and indignation, began to make themselves apparent, while above the tumult one word rose in tones in which it was curious to mark the various degrees of despondency, surprise (this only once, from a young gentleman whom nature had endowed with double joints, and who had but the week before been endued with the idea of making his deformities a means of improving his position in life), don't care, good-natured hopelessness and anger, both contemptuous, and the more violent sort, which inclines the wrathful one to give vent to his feelings by "having it out" with some one, innocent or guilty, it matters not, so sweet is revenge to the feelings of an outraged performer, who, after risking his precious neck regularly every evening, for a stated period, for the noble object of afford-

ing his fellow-creatures pleasure, finds all his self-sacrifice has been in vain, his services are to be rewarded by no more substantial tribute than the echoes of the past applause, which, as one of the outraged ones sagely remarked, weren't likely to be the means of producing bread and cheese and such like commodities necessary for the mortal subsistence—this one word was “screw,” which, being interpreted into the language of ordinary beings, means salary—wages.

The assistant manager listened to the gradually increasing hubbub with a stolid countenance. “Salary,” he said, looking round him with a glance in which the utmost pity and contempt were strangely mingled. “Screw! It’s no use you fighting over the word, you’ll only damage each other’s wardrobes, and unless you’ve got something in your eye, you ain’t likely just now to be in a position to replenish it. Screw!” and oh, the bitterness, not to be equalled by the sourest of Sevilles or St Michaels, that the ex-greengrocer threw into that word. “Screw! Take my advice. Them as have had a half-penny of the guv’nor’s money, ’d better keep it as a curiosity; they won’t have any more specimens to add to the collection, and them as ain’t seen it ’d best comfort themselves with the fact that they never will. As I said afore, if any of you have anything in your eye—”

Here the orator was deterred from proceeding any farther with his speech by having the contents of a pewter pot ejected into his orbs; no

doubt that those whom he addressed might be assured he practised what he preached. This was the signal for a general stampede, and it might have fared but ill with the ex-green-grocer had he not further shown that he spoke as he would act—namely, he “cut it,” and that pretty speedily, from the presence of his outraged company.

But he was not to escape so easily. For his little effort to make himself a name—(his wife called him a great many, but none of them particularly famous, although well-known ones, rather too common, not to say vulgar, to be actually celebrated)—his worthy spouse, convinced most decidedly of her ability to see more with one orb than he with his two, impressed the fact upon him in such an effective manner—namely, by transforming his watery blue “seers” into two of the most beautiful ones, such as were boasted by the far-famed Susan of romance and drama; disfigured by which he reopened his establishment in old Well Street, where he lived and died a broken-down dealer, among his oranges, potatoes, and such like appertainments to the grocery trade.

But to return to the company.

After in various ways expressing their opinion upon their late manager’s conduct, the wrathful fraternity separated, sadder but wiser men.

Among these our friend Jerry, though he said very little, you may be sure he felt the more. He had been rather calculating upon this little bit of extra good luck, so he looked upon the London

engagement, as considerably augmenting his little stock of savings, about which he had been rather thoughtful of late, and was scarcely prepared to see his hopes thus summarily dashed to the ground, to say nothing of his being considerably out of pocket as regards lodging and keep, not too inexpensive in the big city, a new rig out for the occasion, and the railway fee, which was to have been refunded, but of course was not done so.

"Well," was our hero's sage reflection after mentally reviewing the case for some time, and pronouncing it a bad one—"it's no use crying over spilt milk, as the pater had it; it only makes it all the more watery. So the best thing you can do is not to waste any more time, there's enough gone already; pack up and be off on the old track, and see whether the guv'nor can give you anything. If he's filled up your place, as the engagement was for three months, it's as well it's got no farther, 'poor little orphan,' as I used to say in the old riddle of the cow that stuck in the middle of the turnip field. You must go into private life for a bit and do it on the rigid economy system. It's a pity it happened just now; fifty pound ain't much to begin housekeeping on, but—" Jerry's reflections got like the cow—no farther. He found himself blushing furiously, pulled himself up short with the admonition not to talk nonsense, which he certainly seemed inclined to do. What was he thinking about going into housekeeping for, I wonder?

And why, when he did so, did he smile so

queerly to himself and say softly,—“I too must keep something for a day when it rains?” speaking with a half-broken accent, as though he were imitating some one, who, as the quaint adaptation of the idiom indicated, was not too familiar with our language. But to return. Jerry had admonished himself to set to work at once and pack up—a process which as a rule did not take him very long, but on the occasion in question took him even less time than usual. Truth to tell, no sooner did he repair to his by no means too comfortable lodgings—he might have afforded better had it not been for his suddenly-formed determination to study economy—and begin the operation—than an infuriated ogress in the form—I cannot even, with all due reverence for the sex, say sublime form—of his landlady stood before him, demanding in fully emphasized language the rent owing to her.

In vain he repudiated her accusation that he was scoundrel and thief enough to try and defraud of her rightful due, namely, the small amount he was in her debt, a poor lone widow with a large family—he wondered why it is all landladies are lone widows, but a little experience of their company and manners caused him to wonder no longer; she would not listen to reason in the shape of a solemnly-worded promise to the effect that he would within a week discharge his obligation, leaving her his address when at home as a guarantee for his honesty.

The infuriated lady demanded that he should

leave a more substantial proof of his integrity, in the shape of his luggage, which, in plain words, was stopped. By dint of great manœuvring he managed to secrete his new suit about his person, leaving his only other worldly properties as arranged behind him.

Somewhat depressed by this incident, Jerry, after a little calculation, ascertained the whereabouts of the Petman show, started to overtake it, vowing in his inmost heart evermore to resist the attractions of the London engagement.

N.B.—He laid a particular stress upon the London, as though any other engagement was not to be mentioned in the same breath. The reader may naturally suppose he was calculating upon Mr Petman's not having supplied his place. If such was the case, his hopes were not this time doomed to disappointment. He overtook the show at Grimston, one of the best stopping places, made his way at once to the manager's presence, and found him, for a wonder, in a remarkably good temper, a blissful state of affairs, due to a more than usually prosperous run of business. The visit to the big market town had, in fact, proved most successful, and the day of which I write being Saturday, the worthy manager expected to add considerably to his already abundant harvest.

He therefore had prepared a specially alluring programme, in which the names of his stars were emblazoned forth in more than ordinary magnitude, with which to take by storm the mighty multitude which flocked to partake of the delights he offered.

It was, therefore, in a very complacent mood that he received, nay, welcomed, his *ci-devant* clown, and instantly accepted his proffered services; declaring in a most unprecedented burst of happiness that, if there had been one thing wanting to fill the cup of his pleasure, it was the presence at that night's show of the world-renowned king of comicality, Jerry.

Our hero took this somewhat loudly and unexpectedly expressed appreciation of his talents for as much as it was worth, reminding himself that there's no smoke without fire, but remarking at the same time that if the worthy manager's cup was full, his glass or tankard had certainly been so too, more than once that day, and had not remained so only for a very short period. In spite, however, of this knowledge, as some one says, the human heart, however hard, is never entirely impregnable to flattery, however the recipient may disclaim to the contrary, and, feeling particularly jovial, and, in fact, in capital trim for his work, Jerry, having resisted an impulse which bade him hunt up a few of his old pals, determined to keep his arrival a secret, as a surprise, he nearly said to himself, then laughed at his own absurdity and went on laughing, though what at it would be hard to say, he scarcely knew himself, till he had a big tea to set him up for the coming work. I believe he was half surprised to find he had such a good appetite, then laughed at his own folly, and ordered a fourth red herring, which he ate with as great avidity as he had its three

predecessors, and actually, worst sign of all, laughed at one of his own jokes—namely his own appearance in the little cracked looking-glass which did duty for a mirror in the dressing tent. The sight, even of his own grinning “phiz,” as he called it, had not the effect of sobering him; on the contrary, so pleased was he with what he saw in some thought which entered his mind at that moment, that he flung his hat into the air, turned a somersault, coming the right way up, as he expressed it, in time to receive upon his head its proper, or rather regulation gear, a trick he had often attempted but, till now, never succeeded in successfully accomplishing. Indeed, so surprised and delighted was he at his cleverness, that he found himself bestowing upon the feat a little well-merited applause. This act of self-congratulation was brought to an abrupt conclusion by a fear lest he (Jerry) should be late for his duties—a fear which one glance at his watch might have told him was groundless—but I am not so sure he said. duties, it is merely a supposition, which after all may have been wrong. Yet what else could he mean? What else could he be too late for?

If my reader should like to argue the question out, let him pause for a moment and do so. Jerry, I may say, did not. He did not even wait to assure himself that his collar was properly in its place; he had only a little before liberated his necktie from its very near vicinity of his right ear, that article of wearing apparel not being included in his costume for that evening—the

magnificent, and at the same time ludicrous arrangement he had purchased in order to shine in the London show—one composed of every colour in the rainbow, which had a most singular appearance during a triple somersault, when the owner seemed to have suddenly become washed out, until he once more resumed his usual state of inactivity, or rather want of motion for the moment.

With great haste, considering the time he had to spare, our hero made his way into the ante-room, as usual, erected off the ring, where he was greeted by the grooms and such few of the performers as were waiting their turns, with unceasing pleasure.

It was easy to see by the hearty reception accorded him that if they did consider him a bit queer in his notions, our hero was, notwithstanding, a general favourite among his companions.

He was soon the centre of a rather excited group, all eager to tell of their own good fortune, and even more so to express their sympathy with the young clown on the “—— sell he had been let in for,” as Will Breakneck not too elegantly put it, and to loudly declare that if ever they met again with the manager at fault, they would avenge, in a manner which he was not likely to forget, the insult to their fellows.

But in spite of this warm extension of brotherly hands in friendship, Jerry was just a little pre-occupied, and every now and then cast somewhat anxious glances at the entrance to the tent, as

though expecting some one who did not put in an appearance.

The first part of the programme came to an end, the interval over, and the Breaknecks opened the second part.

Jerry grew more and more anxious, and at last, when the curtains parted to admit a slight figure enveloped in a long dark cloak, he fairly tore himself away from his companions to meet it.

Lizette, for my reader guesses at once it was she, was busily arranging some flowers in her hair as she entered, and not noticing who it was who went towards her so eagerly with outstretched hand, stood aside to let him pass as it were out at the entrance.

“Good evening, Miss Hartzmann,” said Jerry, in a singularly gruff voice even for him. He knew not why, but his heart was thumping so violently under its many-coloured vest that he wondered he could get the words out at all. “How are you?” I do not think this was quite the greeting our hero had intended to give her, but somehow everything else but the very ordinary salutation had fled from his mind.

“How are you?” Had he himself answered the question he would have said “sweeter, prettier, more dear, little Lizette, than ever,” but as it was he waited for her to speak, looking into her face as eagerly as though he saw it now for the first time, or as though he was bent on comparing this the original with the stolen copy he had so unconsciously graven on his heart.

At his words the little German girl fell back a step or two, dropping her hands from her head, and uttering a quaint little cry of surprise.

Then she stepped forward again, holding out her two hands, while her face grew bright with a glad look of recognition.

"Why, if I never—and it is Jerry, my friend? Is it you? Back again so soon. Why, I did not look for you for nearly Christmas."

Jerry's face clouded a little, then a ray of comfort flashed across his mind. "Even," he said to himself, "even if she says she does not expect you, that is not to say she is not glad to see you."

A little bit of reflection which plainly showed that Mr Petman's few and unstudied words of praise had had their effect in increasing our hero's good opinion of himself.

So far, however, as his reflection went, he did not seem to have overrated his value in a certain lady's eyes. She was evidently pleased to see him—unfeignedly pleased, for although I always maintain that every woman has a spice of the actress about her, little Lizette might in this case have formed an exception to the general rule.

"Why," she said, as Jerry shook both her hands very fervently, but at the same time rather awkwardly, in his own big ones; so big that they seemed to almost swallow them up, but his earnest grasp must have done serious damage to the little fingers which were left bare by the pretty if plain mittens, before little Lizette would have

owned it hurt her. "Why," she said, "it was you; it is you, and I did not know it. It was silly for me, I mean of me, it is so difficult to remember" (Lizette alluded to the proper placing of English prepositions, not to her inability to bear her friends in mind). "It was silly of me, but you see it is the new dress, also besides I was not looking to you—so no cause I should not know you, is it?"

Jerry, with an earnestness hardly befitting so trivial an acknowledgment, vowed that none could see what they were not looking at, and forthwith became singularly silent for him. Truth to tell, he had suddenly and most unexpectedly grown very bashful about a little matter which for the last half hour he had been turning over in his mind—in relation to a certain bunch of violets he had purchased on his way to the show, and which he now held with great care and secrecy, concealed in the pocket of his trousers, which, after the fashion of their kind, were, to say the least of it, voluminous. These said violets he had pictured fastened in the front of a certain dainty white satin bodice (why he had decided in his own mind that that was the costume likely to be worn that evening it is hard to say); but now when he saw that a pretty scarlet costume, fairly dazzling to the eye in colour, and dainty and pretty enough in fashion to betray Madame Petite's skilful handiwork, had been donned in preference to the one he certainly admired the more, he suddenly became uncertain in his mind

as to whether his gift might after all be acceptable.

After much shuffling, during which he did his best to listen to and answer coherently the questions put to him by the little scarlet satin-robed artiste, our hero however, as he inwardly expressed it, managed to screw up his courage to the sticking point, and present his humble little offering.

It was received with pleasure; and the warm thanks given in return made Jerry's cheeks tingle to such an alarming degree that it was well he had the usual coating of paint to hide them, or little Lizette might have been seriously alarmed for her friend's welfare.

She, however, was in happy ignorance of the inward tumult every word she spoke tended to increase, and was talking in her simple confiding way of all that had happened since she and her old friend and protector had met.

"Oh," she said, standing on tiptoe before the mirror fastened up inside of the tent, in order to catch sight of herself in it—"oh, it has seemed like the years since you went away, so long, so long. I missed seeing you very much at first, but they were all kind, very kind. I did not know I had so many friends until you went away."

Jerry twirled his cap thoughtfully, not to say nervously, between his fingers, and did not express any surprise that the little fancy rider should have so soon become a favourite. I suppose he did not consider it a point worth arguing about;

at any rate he let it pass, like the wise fellow he was, and asked instead :

“And Smith? Has he looked after ‘The Turk’ every evening for you? I gave him the tip, for,” he was going to add, “some people are fond of playing tricks;” but he could not afford to spoil his content just then by any suspicion of ill-favour towards his fellows, so added instead, “for I know he” (meaning Smith) “is only too ready to repay your kindness to him.”

“Me! what did I do?” asked Lizette, striving in vain to disengage a cluster of white roses from her hair, and sadly entangling the pretty brown curls by so doing. “What did I do for him, eh?”

“You were kind to him without knowing it,” said Jerry, a little absently.

“Without knowing it! You do not then give me the credit to be kind because I wished it. You are complimentary,” and Lizette laughed just the prettiest laugh in all the world, as she dragged out the long word.

“No, I am not,” said Jerry fervently. “I hate compliments. I always speak the truth.”

“Then tell me how is this. Will the flowers look well?” And having fastened the white roses carefully in her bodice, and half-hidden the violets in a knot of curls, the little fancy rider, owing to the smallness of the looking-glass, evidently not quite satisfied in her own mind that her handiwork was successful, turned to our hero in her simple way to gain his approval.

Although Jerry had just declared he always

spoke the truth, when thus so artlessly challenged he seemed to find some difficulty in keeping to his rule. It might have been that words would not have expressed his admiration of the pretty figure in front of him, but I think it really was because he had himself just had an experience of how sweet is flattery to the frail human heart, and he did not care to be one of those who would wantonly spoil a simple childlike trust.

As it was, he eyed the girl in front of him with a cool deliberation, of which he had hardly deemed himself capable in his hot-headedness of a few moments before, and said carelessly :

"Yes, that will do very well, but I don't like this dress as well as the white one. The other is not quite so 'gay' as this, but, you'll do, you'll do."

You hypocrite Jerry, to assume such a non-chalant tone. Of course she'll "do."

Lizette received our hero's praise very gaily.

"That is good," she said smiling. "You say it as you mean. I know that. You do not say, 'You are beautiful, you are like an angel, Lizette;' it would not be true, and I like it best as you say it, 'You'll do, you'll do.'" And the lively girl repeated the words in a comical imitation of his own serious manner, which made Jerry smile.

"I'm glad you don't like people who want to fill your head with all sorts of nonsense," he said in his fatherly way. "But now tell me, how have you been getting on?"

"Very well, very well. I have had the call three times this week, for the skipping-rope trick,

and Mr Petman has been pleased. He has said so."

Jerry wondered whether he had proffered any more substantial proof of his pleasure at the little artiste's success, but decided in his own mind that it was hardly likely.

"Yes," went on Lizette gaily, "he was very pleased. Herr Hermann said so."

"Oh, indeed," said Jerry carelessly. "When did he tell you that?"

"To-night; he wrote it—see," and from her pocket the fancy rider produced a little twisted note, carefully unfolding which she handed it frankly to her friend.

Jerry stared somewhat blankly at the few words the note contained. His rather puzzled expression made Lizette laugh.

"Oh, I am silly," she said, laughing heartily; "I forget, it is in my language and his, and you do not understand. Let me tell you. It is—'The master was very pleased last night that you did so well. He himself said it. He rarely wastes his breath in praise, so you ought to feel particularly honoured. Allow me to offer my congratulations, and should you think of wearing the very pretty costume, in which we all agreed you looked most charming last night, will these few roses not go well with it? If you should think otherwise, throw them away.—Your countryman, CARL HERMANN.'"

Lizette made this rough translation of the note as naïvely as though it were some lesson she were

repeating, while Jerry for once wished he was scholar enough to understand the "gibberish" for himself, although not for a moment did he doubt that he was fully master of the contents of the letter. His little friend could have no object in hiding half her confidence from him.

Before, however, he had time to say a word in reply, the curtains over the opening into the ring parted, and some one entered.

He did not notice who it was, but Lizette was not so occupied in tugging at those tiresome little curls, which under no persuasion whatever could be induced to lie straight, but that she could spring away from our hero's side to greet, with her usual childish impetuosity, the new comer.

It was Carl Hermann, the young ring-master, who hastened to return his little countrywoman's salutation, and listen to the half shy, half arch little speech she made him in her own tongue, evidently thanks for his gift, for by looks and gestures the young man seemed to imply it was but a poor gift, that the pleasure in it was on his side at their being accepted.

This, however, the fancy rider shyly persisted was not the case, and evidently not adverse to be the recipient of her gratitude, Carl Hermann listened to her quaintly-worded thanks with evident gratification.

Nor was that all, for from the flowers he turned the conversation to the approval which Mr Petman had expressed at the little German girl's very successful performance, and from that to

other matters, which, judging by the signs of merriment which every now and then escaped Lizette, were highly amusing and interesting.

She was not noisy in her mirth, but kept smiling, while the dimples chased each other over her pretty face in a manner most bewitching to behold.

So Jerry thought, after watching them for a few moments. At the end of that time he began to wish he could join in the joke, or at least understand what was the subject upon which the two compatriots spoke, for the conversation was of course carried on in their native tongue, which was naturally totally unintelligible to any of their companions—our hero among the number.

In spite of this, however, as I have said, he at first watched with something very akin to pleasure, while the, to him, queer words fall from the pretty red lips, but after a time, when he saw how the chat was almost a one-sided one—but for that reason none the less apparently interesting to both parties—how low impressively uttered sentences—why impressive he could not tell—were listened to with earnest attention; no answer vouchsafed, save a shy smile, and more than once a bright glance tell-tale in its brilliancy, he began to wonder in his own mind how long the *tête-à-tête* was going to last; to be amused and not a little gratified to see how singularly different was his little friend's demeanour to this comparative stranger, so nervous and self-conscious, to the simplicity and *naïveté* which had so lately pleased him; then to wish he could catch Lizette's eye,

so as to beckon her to come again to his side; to wonder why she did not do so. She was surely spinning out her thanks to a totally unnecessary degree. Why did that fellow detain her? He must surely be aware she wanted to get back to her old friend, they had much to talk about after being so long apart. Of course they had; at least I can answer for Jerry.

He had, I must confess, been somewhat pre-occupied during the interview he had already had; but he had just made up his mind to make up for lost time, and impart something of very great importance to his little friend. He would wait no longer—no, not another day; he would make this communication at once, without any further delay. He had been foolish to put it off so long; he would— As he came to this conclusion, with a promptitude which surprised even himself, our hero turned to where the object of his thoughts stood, and unconsciously the rest of his thoughts never came to light, for what he saw before him made it all forgotten, all give place to one idea, and that—What?

I have said that my hero was not particularly clever in any one way, excepting his business, as he called it. He did not, as a rule, show any remarkable proof of possessing a very keen perception; it was more often than not that he let a good chance of some sort slip through his fingers because of his blundering; and rather than otherwise he was—I may as well own it candidly—

slow at discerning a point which to others would be only too plain.

Yes, Jerry was not, as a rule, very quick of comprehension, but in the instance of which I write he saw only too clearly, in one brief moment, what perhaps it would have been better for him to have learnt by degrees.

And what did he see?

Only those two—the new friends, as he had lately called them—Carl Hermann and Lizette Hartzmann—standing together opposite to him; he with his head bent, and an incomprehensible look on his handsome face—Jerry could not but admit it was handsome—and doubly so with its look of eagerness and interest, making the dark eyes flash from under the long lashes, which shaded the sallow cheek, now slightly flushed, thus adding an additional charm to a countenance in which the chief fault was usually its want of animation; she with her face slightly turned away, but a tell-tale blush of great intensity burning in the one visible cheek, the eyelids drooping suspiciously over the merry brown orbs until they were suddenly raised with a look such as Jerry had never seen in them before—a look which, often as he had seen them full of gratitude and tenderness, made every previous glance forgotten, for this unconsciously betrayed to that onlooker a secret, even she who gave it, and he on whom it fell, did not guess was in existence.

What each felt at that moment I know not. To the ordinary beholder, they were only a pretty

girl and a fine-looking young fellow, an interesting couple, exchanging a greeting of some warmth, for the two hands which were clasped, certainly did so with so much fervour, to judge from the way in which they lingered in each other, as though loath to leave.

But Jerry saw more than this. He saw suddenly all his castles in the air tumble to the ground. Until he heard the crash of their fall he scarce knew to what a height he had raised their walls, scarcely knew he had so much as dug the foundation, before he found to his cost how rotten a one it was. All his hopes crushed and dead in one brief moment of consciousness.

He had truly waited, and that, alas! too long. Too long had he delayed to ask for what he now knew was beyond his reach; he had waited and lost all. And while he had been absent, "people" had truly been kind to his little friend; they had more than taken his place to her, for here was one who, even more than the master, was pleased with the little artiste, and she in return the same with him, unless those pretty brown eyes were false to their owner; here was one who thought it no waste of breath to praise anything so charming as the dainty little fairy—praise she was only too honoured to receive; here was one for whom the pretty costume of scarlet satin had been donned, whose roses were carefully guarded above the fluttering little heart, so that every breath of air floated their delicate fragrance to the owner's senses; one who spoke in a language

which truly our hero might not use, although he, as perfectly as those who uttered it, knew and interpreted its import.

Too late, Jerry, too late!

That sweet face on which he had once dared to dream of imprinting a kiss to seal a new and dearer relationship—those pretty lips which once he dared dream should whisper in answer to the one question which has never been absent from your mind all the long days of that month, the only reply he had thought they would frame—that little angel being whose life was to him one source of pleasure to think upon, would never fulfil his dreams now. The face, the eyes were bright with a scarcely created feeling which sealed the lips for ever to him, and placed a distance wider than the whole breadth of the earth between the fair young life and his. Too late! Yes, Jerry almost uttered the words aloud as he stood gazing with bright, all-seeing eyes at what he saw.

He must dream no more, build no more castles in the air, but wake to stern reality, clear away the ruins of his fallen edifices, and know that the happy future he had planned for himself would never be, never anything but something too beautiful to be realised in this hard existence. That question which was to have made him the happiest of men must remain unanswered—nay, unasked—by him. His place was given to another, who would, if appearances spoke truly, be only too willing and ready to accept it.

Yes, Jerry found this all out as he stood there waiting for Lizette to come back to him, and knowing well she had gone from him for ever.

And what did he do when this knowledge came to him so swiftly and surely? He did not flinch nor turn pale. If he did the latter, the paints upon his cheeks covered the evidence of his inability to entirely withstand this cruel attack upon his life's happiness, did not even move his gaze from the future, which he would never forget.

No, he only coolly took his hands out of his pockets where they had been extending his voluminous trousers to their greatest breadth, a trick of the young clown's when he was particularly puzzled, his favourite attitude when in a brown study—therefore one not very often adopted by him—calmly turned down his collar, which had somehow assumed its favourite position, standing up beyond his ears, and taking his "jelly-bag" hat, as the boys called it, from where it was planted at an extreme angle at the back of his head, and placed it with the utmost precision in its proper place, over his nose.

This done he stared thoughtfully at his shoes for some moments, as though seeking to find in the monstrous crimson rosettes (bows were too modern) a solution to the mystery he was working out with so much difficulty. Presently, however, he apparently gave up the problem, and removing his gaze, discovered for the first time that he still held in his hand Carl Hermann's note which he had sent with the flowers.

Half involuntarily he twisted the dainty missive in his fingers and crushed it in his strong grasp, just as he was trying so mercilessly to crush the hope out of his strong brave heart. How nobly did he bear the test, only for a moment filled with wild anger against the fate which, in one glance, had showed him how it mocked his happiness! Then the struggle was over, the battle was won; and as though ashamed of having given vent to his feelings in so petty a manner, he spread the note, with its words in the language he could not understand, out on his broad palm, and carefully, almost reverently—for it belonged to Lizette—smoothed out the folds and doubled it as it had been given to him.

This done, he crossed the ante-room just as the Breaknecks, their performance over, entered, and touching Lizette lightly on the arm, held the letter out to her, saying simply,—

“This is yours—is it not?”

As he spoke, did he think of the dream he had so lately had, when everything he owned, his life, himself, worthless as he accounted that possession, was to have been hers, and all she possessed, her own sweet self, his?

Now even this scrap of paper he dared not keep, because it belonged to her, and she would never be anything else but his little friend, the little girl whom he had been allowed to protect and guard from ill until some one more worthy claimed that privilege. Lizette turned quickly, and blushed slightly, though he did not look

at her, but at her companion, whose gaze was fortunately fixed on the little German girl, or the keen searching look with which his inferior (?) favoured him, might have been resented. She took the paper with a quick "thank you," and holding it to Herr Hermann, made some remark upon its contents.

The ring-master smiled, and tossing his head with a peculiar gesture of *hauteur* which became him well, made some light reply in his own language; in reply to which he received a quick glance from the pretty brown eyes, half defiant, half shy.

Carl Hermann smiled, and taking the note from her, pointed to some words in it, as though to justify his last remark. Then, as Lizette shook her head in disbelief, he, as though absently, tore the missive and let the fragments fall to the ground.

It was a little action, but perhaps because he was in a particularly alert mood it struck Jerry, he scarce knew why, unpleasantly.

No doubt he thought Lizette would have liked to have treasured the little note as a remembrance of past kindness, but if she scarcely noted the action, why should he?

Before he had time to take himself to task in the matter, the band struck up Fräulein Hartzmann's music. Smith, with an air of pride comical to behold, led forth "The Turk" into the ring. Jerry hesitated a moment, cast a stolen glance at Lizette, then turned, and instead

of offering her his hand as usual, drew aside the curtain over the entrance and made way to let her pass.

Apparently his services were not missed; you see, during his absence, some one else had taken his place. The young ring-master himself unfastened the long cloak from the snowy throat, disclosing the daintily-clad form, handed back the whip he had been holding with a low bow and a few whispered words, then taking the little hand within his own, just as Jerry used to do, only I fancy the clasp was a little bit tighter, the hold not quite so cold, bent his head and led the little fancy rider from the ante-room. Our hero dropped the curtain, stood for a moment listening with a queer look on his face to the storm of applause which greeted the fair young artiste's appearance, then gave himself a shake, and retiring to a distant corner, practised "double wheels" with the greatest vigour and precision, until one of the grooms told him Miss Hartzmann's first act was over. Then with a one, two, three, a loud "Wallaloo," whatever language that might be, Jerry too, with a magnificent hand-over-hander, made his entrance into the ring.

CHAPTER XI.

A SHATTERED CASTLE.

AND that was how Jerry saw the first brick in his castle in the air give way which in the end was to bring those fragile edifices—why do we trouble to build them to such a height of such flimsy material?—about his ears; that in the days to come, wherever his steps turned, his feet must strike against some shattered fragments of what was once so fair a piece of architecture: fit house in every verity for the peerless queen, sweetest of angels, yet most perfect of mortals—who?

None other than the poor little fancy rider, little Lizette Hartzmann, who was alone in the world at it were, alone in our big England with scarcely a friend or countryman near her to— Stay, there was Carl Hermann; he was her countryman—that would of course prove a tie to arouse in him at least a feeling of kindness towards her; yes, but how about the interrupted conversation on that night, when a tired, weary-looking girl, shabbily

dressed in black, had claimed his attention for one moment from his companion, the girl in the green ulster, who, too, had been so impatient at the obstacle to continuing the *tête-à-tête*?

Ah, but that was quite a different affair; one is not compelled because one meets a country-woman in a strange land to rush as it were into her arms and intrude oneself into her business.

Certainly not; all that a gentleman is bound to do is to listen quietly and attentively to her question, giving her his whole attention for the time, without allowing a glance of any sort, either of amusement, indifference, or annoyance, or intonation of the voice to betray there is anything about her appearance to warrant such, and to answer what she asks as well as is in his power, with perhaps the licence of offering a little advice, if not a kindly proffer of help, or word of reassurance—that is all he had to do. And who was the more likely to prove her friend?

Carl Hermann, the handsome, nice-spoken young ring-master, not a little known and appreciated for his pretty little speeches and compliments, all the more highly valued because never bestowed unless upon some worthy object, or Jerry, the clown, the rough-and-ready sort of a fellow, not a bit well favoured in outward appearance, and with a manner which on a first acquaintance struck one as no way a contrast to his person. I leave the reader to judge whether this first impression of my hero was corrected or not by after actions. He had, as we have seen, no very great

reputation among the ladies with whom he had to do; these, in the true sense of the word, were not many, and certainly roughing it on the road was hardly calculated to improve the polish, if there was any to commence with, which was not very often, while equestrian performances and the like were hardly favourable to any save the English (bad) language. One forgot to be grammatical when "Devil-may-care" made a short step at every banner; the Lord Harry was the only historical character whose memory survived when one discovered Will Breakneck, who was holding the trick balloon in which a Union Jack was placed so as to come to hand, during the leap, or a night garment and cap disposed so as to be slipped over the shoulders in the moment of transition, was considerably fatigued by his many and frequent journeys in the direction of the "Green Dragon" and the "Red Lion." (*N.B.* Why not the "Red Dragon," the "Green Lion"?) As regards geography, more than one artist was nightly cheered for his performance with the globe, but beyond this no one was particularly fond of showing his knowledge of the science; while as for arithmetic, though it was an assured fact had there been any defection in the weekly screw the recipient was sure to at once make the discovery, but as no one had any need to count beyond the numeral of twenty (shillings) for this, any want of knowledge in "figures" was no drawback to the company, unless in the light the signor put it when gazing in awed, not to say admiring,

astonishment at Madame Fourteenstone's corpulent form. Poor "Star of the Evening," it was a pity, as Will Nobones remarked, horses like railway trucks could not be labelled "not to carry more than so many tons," an announcement which at a performance on the following day was emblazoned forth before the eyes of the giggling delighted audience on a placard, slipped with great dexterity round the neck of the well-trained steed of the rather massive lady-rider, a little joke which, though fully appreciated by all save the said animal's rider, led to a prompt dismissal of the lively acrobat, who forthwith joined a rival show, on which he made his manager's fortune and broke his own neck, by his new and marvellous feat on a slack wire which was, as his old enemy Madame remarked, "not made to carry four tons or one ounce of pleasure for a pound of pain" (the tenor of some of madame's remarks was somewhat obscure at times, according to the pints of four ale she had "rendered obscure" during the day, to brace her up for her evening's work). Well, as the signor said, if only the boss, *i.e.*, the mighty Petman, had an eye to figures, it would have been all the better for the show ("and for the horses," put in the incorrigible acrobat, irrespective of a fiery glance from the outraged owner of "The Star of the Evening"), while as for religion, a young man who did the "strong" business with light weights, who had once been pew opener at a Methodist chapel, until he had discovered that letting people in in a circus was better and more

remunerative than taking people out of the chapel when overcome at the fearful pictures presented to their minds by their beloved pastor—namely, the contrast of their future state with that of his own—this ex-pew opener was, I say, about the only one in the show who made any show of possessing any religion, he having, as Will Breakneck declared, sufficient for all his fellows. “If he expected to get a re-engagement with his light weights which any one could see through, why——if he could see why the others need trouble.”

But to return to our hero and the young German.

As I have said, if any one was likely to prove a friend who more so than Carl Hermann, the young well-educated ring-master, her countryman? Not the happy-go-lucky clown with his rough ways and self-taught manners and learning. Side by side on a first acquaintance, the two appeared distinctly different in every respect. The boor and the gentleman were hardly likely to contrast favourably. How was it Lizette Hartzmann had been so long in making a distinction; surely a nature like hers should have quickly recognised gold from brass? But there, after all, how was she to tell? she was little more than a child—a child in years, and a very child in the ways of the world.

Our hero, as I said at the commencement of this tale, hardly deserved his name. And now I have a confession to make which, I fear, in spite of all the trouble I have taken to set him before

the reader, will, after all, sadly overtopple any good opinion which might have been formed of him. You see, though he was a clown, and a circus one too, he was a mortal after all, and not a very strong one, I am afraid; not perhaps much worse than many of his fellows, but all the same scarcely up to the mark of perfection which his part, I do not say his character, in this story ought to entail.

But why do I stay to excuse him? I do not suppose I am going to be more fortunate than my fellows in discovering to my readers one really and truly deserving of the name of "hero," quite an obsolete character now-a-days, I fear, at least in real life. Let me out with the honest truth at once.

It was somewhat in the way with Jerry.

I have said he was as fond of a lark, a spree (*N.B.* in polite language a bit of fun, if those three words can fully express the actual meaning contained in the one), but as a rule his enjoyment was of a more innocent kind than that of his fellows.

He was as fond of a joke as any one, and I may say, without flattery, a good deal quicker at planning and carrying such out; and if his tricks were not always as harmless in their fulfilment, there is ever the well-worn excuses at hand, "you cannot put an old head on young shoulders," "boys will be boys," or as I read it, "boys will (try to) be young men;" and you may be sure if Jerry ever became aware of the ill effects of any

of his "larking," he did his best to remedy the evil so far as lay in his power, at the same time administering to himself a sharp rebuke and mental shaking, which as a rule had more effect upon him than self-admonition usually does.

His fellows always declared that at a really good revel there was no better master than Jerry, whom they would occasionally inveigle into making one at their feasts, whatever they called them. Indeed, the young clown often by his presence in a certain measure somewhat toned down the character of these meetings, that is, controlled certain high spirits so far as he was able, so doing by a judicious move, the wisdom of which he had long since learnt was worth any amount of preaching, viz., that of taking the lead in their pranks, and then when fairly acknowledged as master, restraining rather than encouraging any larks which might lead to disagreeable consequences to the players, or, what was of more consequence, the played upon.

Well, then, to come to the point without any further delay, for it will seem to the reader the more trouble I take to defend my hero the greater I consider his faults. On the night of his return to the mighty Petman show, as I have said, Jerry made the discovery that all the happy moments he had spent on building that very pretty castle in the air he had been wasting so much precious time, not to say material, in the way of imagination.

It was all a mistake. He had missed his turn,

whether from his own fault or any one else's, he could hardly tell.

Either he was too slow or some one else too fast—what did it matter which?

The mischief was done, and perhaps it was a good thing he had found it out before matters had gone too far. Better be so than have had the discovery forced upon him before the eyes of all the audience, meaning by this his fellow-men. It was just this, as Jerry put it in his own way: "He was just a-going to fetch 'em with a double hand-over-hand, right into the centre of the sawdust, when some one as was more calculated in every way to have a chance and please had got in front of him, and he (Jerry) was just out of it. The best sherry and four ale don't mix; so, Jerry, my boy, just bottle up and don't make an ass of yourself."

That was our hero's reflection as, during his turn—I am not speaking figuratively now—he, as he put it, kept his eye upon "the two compatriots," which operation, in the ordinary course of things, ought to have had a depressing effect upon him and his business; but it didn't. His tricks went as briskly as ever, his antics and jokes were just as droll, and no one would have guessed how almost every glance from the grey-green eyes in a certain direction meant the falling of another brick from the lofty height of the castle of the future—each one descending with a smash which would have knocked every bit of humour out of an ordinary man, that is, I mean one who

was not a clown, and whose business was not so born and bred in him as in our hero.

After what had occurred, after the discovery he had made, I mean, Jerry's double hand-over-hander ought to have been an ignominious failure, but it wasn't: it "went," as usual, capitally. When he found himself the "right way up," and met a bright glance from the pretty brown eyes, that as yet never dared to meet the admiring glances of certain equally handsome grey orbs, he ought to have returned it with one of careless indifference, if not of agonised beseeching, which even he, blunt as he usually was in speech, could not find words to express, but he didn't; when, in the middle of his best tale, a lady's whip fell almost at his feet, he ought to have lost the thread of his tale and restored the pretty plaything to its owner, with a fiery glance at his rival which dared his interference; when his own and Lizette's turn came simultaneously to an end, he ought to have ousted all other competitors, and claimed his old right to escort the fair artiste from the ring, but he didn't; nay, rather joked the whole affair by assuming the manner of a shy performer, and hanging back bashfully to one side of the ring, until Will Breakneck stepped forward and led him, bowing and kissing his hand in the most gushing manner, from the ring, imitating to the life the one two three little skips and a jump with which it is usual for lady riders to make their exit, but rather marring his character, but creating a roar of laughter, by converting the jump into a

double somersault ; while surely even the stoutest heart that hero in fiction ever possessed (which certainly wasn't Jerry), would not have been proof against such a lamentable and prophetic picture as that presented by a certain bunch of violets lying withered and crushed in the sawdust, under the very feet of the little German fancy-rider, as she shyly gave her hand to the young ring-master, to take her answer to the very loud and prolonged call, forgetting that to her merry partner in the turn belonged half the honours, while the white roses were still carefully guarded over the fluttering little heart—of course it fluttered, one does not always get the double balloon held so steadily as to make the two-flag trick “go” with such *éclat*—ought to have reduced the young clown to the lowest ebb of wounded feelings, with which, and the discarded flowers safely cherished in his left breast coat-pocket, just because they reposed for the space of ten minutes among some dusky brown curls, half hidden by them for fear they should spoil the effect of the pretty costume, worn especially for, and greatly enhanced by the gift of “my countryman,” he should have returned home to his desolate lodgings and watched the dreary night over his dead hopes, represented by the dead flowers so heartlessly discarded.

Jerry didn't do anything of the sort. As I have more than once said, he wasn't a bit a hero, only an ordinary sort of a man, and so at this, what I suppose I ought to call the crisis of his

life, he behaved just as any ordinary mortal would have done.

He accomplished his double hand-over-hander as successfully as usual, responded to little Lizette's glance with a gay nod and smile, which, so far as I know, did not cost him a very great effort, certainly did not wring his heart-strings, allowed Smith to return the fallen whip to its fair owner, and as for the flowers, left them to be raked away among the sawdust, when it was swept up on the morrow preparatory to the start on the Monday, and far from returning to his lodgings and bemoaning his fate—though he certainly did the former, it was to make a very good supper of cold steak pudding and stout, and afterwards to retire to rest and sleep, if not exactly the sleep of the innocent, at least that of one who has earned and enjoys his repose.

The next morning being Sunday, he ought to have taken his mother's prayer-book from where it lay wrapped up in a coloured handkerchief at the bottom of his portmanteau, and found his way to a church, during the service to discover he had missed his vocation—if I may use the word—in being a circus clown, he was meant rather to make people snivel with fear than to laugh for happiness at innocent folly, and so he would turn parson, or clerk, or some such.

In reality Jerry did nothing of the sort. To begin with, his mother had never left him a prayer-book, so he had not got it tied up in his handkerchief, which, if he had, he could never

have had secreted at the bottom of his portmanteau, not possessing such an aristocratic article of luggage, his usual receptacle for his few worldly private belongings being a carpet-bag and a well-worn battered trunk for his "properties."

Thus, although the bells of a church near at hand early woke him with their "clang-clang," repeated with an energy and rapidity truly enterprising on the part of the bell-ringer, and doubly deafening on that of the listener, Jerry did not for a moment think of replying to their invitation.

You see he wasn't used to that "sort of thing," as he called it. Not that he was a "scoffer," as the gentleman owner of the light weights called it, but I think if any one had cared to ask him his views, they would have found his idea was—the way a man got through life was his religion, duty first, pleasure afterwards, take the good with the bad, and make the best you can out of them.

Well, as I said, Jerry did not go to church; on the contrary, he devoutly wished the sacred edifice had been some streets removed from him, that he might have enjoyed a continuation of his repose, but finding this end unlikely, he got up, made a good breakfast, and went for a stroll round, which ended in the ground where the show was "pitched."

Here, with great secrecy and despatch, lest any suspicion should be aroused that the mighty Petman was breaking, or allowing to be broken, the

fourth commandment—a supposition which would have been fatal to his reputation as a manager—active preparations were being made for the departure on the morrow. Sunday, I may observe, was always a busy day with the show ; if not one for travelling, it was always one of preparations : any little odd jobs in the carpentry or painting line were always attended to on this day.

Thus Jerry, as usual, found life pretty active among the circus tents, and not knowing a better way—at least one more to his liking—than making himself useful, he sent off one of the hands, a poor, wretched lad of about seventeen, who had joined the show about two years previous, his soul filled with a wild wish to belong to anything so glorious and gorgeous as a circus, willing to give his services for the glory of the affair, or, at least, for the nominal salary of eighteen pence a week ; a view of the matter, however, which he had long since relinquished, as, a prey to the pangs of hunger, he did his eighteen pence regularly on what he styled a good blow-out, every Saturday night, and then spent the whole Sunday wondering how he was going to exist the rest of the week. The poor simpleton had eaten so liberally of boiled pork, greens, and suet pudding, at a cook shop in the town, that he was simply incapable of any action, save to blubber like the proverbial “town bull,” and implore some one to knock him on the head, and put him out of his misery, for the green and yellow stars floating

before his eyes made it next to impossible for him to hold his head up, much less assist in the demolition of the temple of the mighty Petman, who, in spite of an extraordinary good run of luck, since he could not quarrel with fortune, was ready to vent his spite on any one near at hand; having, like many holding his office, a certain quantity of spleen to get rid of during the week, out it must come, sooner or later.

And out it did come, when, like Jerry, instead of going to church, after his breakfast, he, the manager, strolled down to see how matters were getting on with the show—(he never could make out why it was people were always so sleepy and slow on Sundays; if they couldn't keep awake and lively, they might just as well go to church)—and found Joe Turner, the lad in question, who, as long as the owner of the cook-shop where he had laid out his one bob and a tanner lives, will be remembered as having bolted at the greatest rate this worthy man had ever witnessed, the largest supply of pork, greens, and pudding, ever served to any customer, but that not remembered longer, or in a greater degree, than will the consumer thereof recall the same event; when, I say, this unfortunate youth was found by the energetic manager, crouching in a somewhat singular attitude, more expressive of submission than any group ever formed even in their most dramatic moods by the famous family of the elder Jerry—with one of whose numerous offspring this tale has to do—he (the worthy manager) poured forth the vials of

his wrath upon this unlucky dependant's head, and angrily bade him set about his work.

This command the unfortunate lad was doing his best to obey—being, however, it must be confessed, more a hindrance than a help—when Jerry arrived on the scene of action. He didn't say much; he never did at any time, especially when particularly roused, but his necktie suddenly began its endeavours to reach the neighbourhood of his right ear, and that, as my reader already knows, meant danger.

"Here Joe," he said, quietly taking from the lad's shaking hands the screw-driver with which for the last ten minutes he had been experimenting on one particular nail in the woodwork which formed the support for the seats round the ring, trying in vain to distinguish it from among green balls and yellow stars—mixed this time—a feat which so far had only resulted in severe damage to his shaking fingers, and gave but little promise of his accomplishing his task by the time the master came round his way again—poor Joe, it behoved him to look out then—"Here, Joe," said Jerry quietly, "leave it alone; you're only doing more harm than good. Leave it alone."

"I daresn't, sir," said the lad, staggering against Jerry even while he spoke, and shuddering violently. "It's the master's orders; what'll he say?"

"You leave that part of the matter to me; what's up, you're mighty queer?"

"Oh lor', sir, it was the pudding as did it; it was that rich, but I was that hungry," sobbed Joe,

doubling himself up, and becoming as limp as a muslin apron before it is starched. What a miserable object he did look, to be sure. Jerry, try as he would, could not resist a smile. But he did something else besides.

He caught the victim to the allurements of steak pudding by the collar, not roughly—the poor lad was little better than a bag of bones, a perfect skeleton; you quite expected to hear two bones rattle when he moved, while there seemed every possibility of his collapsing altogether if any one administered a slight shake to his emaciated form—and half lifting, half dragging, succeeded in getting him ensconced upon a pile of sacking, and, bidding him cheer up and not make a fool of himself over a trifle, proceeded to cover him up with some horse cloths. While thus engaged in showing his knowledge of the existence of a story concerning a good Samaritan, Mr Petman made his appearance.

“Now, you young ——, Joe, why aren’t you at your work? What do you suppose I pay yer for, eh? Why, what the ——” (something extra strong, called forth by the sight of Joe comfortably disposed among the sacking)—“what the —— does this mean?”

There is no describing the amount of passion the worthy manager condensed into this one blank, while the wrathful indignation depicted on his expansive countenance would have awed any one less dauntless than our hero, and even he, as he afterwards owned, fancied he had got a little

more than he bargained for, but he did not show it, not he. He just took off his coat and hung it on a nail, and said quietly, as he set to work on the aggravating nail, which had so baffled all poor Joe's endeavours, and drew it out with a quickness and precision which distinguished his movements whenever he was particularly roused :—

"I'm very sorry—for Joe, sir—he's a bit shaky ; ate too much pudding yesterday. Anyhow, it's no use him wasting time trying to do what he can't. He'll only be fit for nothing to-morrow. If you've no objection I'll take his place. I haven't anything better to do."

His quiet manner, just cool enough to show determination, but not careless enough to be called impertinent, had the desired effect—the lion grew tame.

Infuriated as he was, the manager knew of old that one Jerry was worth twenty Joes, especially while the latter was under the influence of the weighty steak pudding. He growled out something about "infernial laziness" and "people minding their own business," but passed on, to vent his spite, however, on some one else, who, it is to be hoped, was more capable of defending himself than poor Joe.

Thus it happened that all that Sunday afternoon saw Jerry working like a horse among the show paraphernalia.

At first he was rather silent, he was thinking a bit, turning the events of the day before over in his mind, and didn't feel very much inclined to

share in the not-too-refined conversation which went on round him.

If the men objected to Sunday work it could hardly be put down to any respect to the day, for they seemed to look upon it as a sort of half-business, half-holiday, and combined their work with such tricks and horse-play as seemed to please their fancy.

Under this state of affairs the work progressed but slowly. Jerry stuck to his, but he moved more than half mechanically. Presently, however, he roused himself a bit.

"Look here, men," he said, in his ringing voice, as he came between two grooms, who were about to settle a little difference which had occurred, by means of a hand-to-hand fight, "we're at work now, and let's do it and get done, I say. Leave your romps till after, or if they get to the boss's ears there'll be something to pay."

"No one asked you to interfere," said one of the combatants sulkily.

"I think it's as well for you I did," replied Jerry good temperedly, glancing from the speaker to his would-be opponent, a big, brawny fellow, head and shoulders taller than he was.

This caused a laugh against the smaller man, and put the giant into a good temper.

"Right you are, guv'nor," he said, giving Jerry a sounding smack on the back that made him stagger; "I never fights any one smaller than myself, so stow your wax, Josh, and find some one more yer own size to try yer jokes on next time."

After this the work certainly went on more briskly, and the workers were, as a matter of course, more orderly. Jerry had administered a glass of bitters to Joe, in imbibing which the lad's lank body assumed such a likeness to a corkscrew that Jerry roused a flame of hope in his heart by telling him that if he would repeat the experiment in the ring he would be certain to far out-rival "the man without bones," and the world-renowned "Human Knot," so called from the facility with which he tied himself up in a knot, which it would have baffled even the far-famed Davenport Brothers to untie.

This thought appeared to comfort poor Joe so much that he fell into a quiet sleep, on awakening from which he was fully recovered from all ill effects of suet pudding and its appertainments, all of which he registered a solemn vow—as solemn as he knew how to make it—to abstain from for the future.

So passed Jerry's first day after his return to the show. Did he think that in future he would try and fill the empty place in his heart, left vacant by the love he had so fondly cherished only to have torn from his hold at the last moment, with the no less deserved, if not less valued, gratitude of those whom he could befriend?

It might have been; I do not know. All I am at liberty to disclose as the results of his long and deep thinking, as he sat as usual puffing away at his pipe, that never-failing comforter,

prior to retiring for the night, was the one thought which he uttered aloud,—

“ Well, Jerry, you’ve missed your turn, my man, but you’ll have to go on as before and brave it out. She mustn’t know—for it wouldn’t do to call up a cloud in the sky which is so bright for her. God bless her.”

And that was how our hero made his determination to bear his burden bravely. He was just going to let things go on as they were. He would never in all his life forget what he had hoped might once be, but, all the same, “ she was happy,” and so he was quite content to go on as before.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SPECIAL ENGAGEMENT.

BUT although Jerry, as is the usual way with man, proposed to so quietly settle his own and others' fate, Providence chose it should be otherwise.

Matters were not to go on as they were before the London engagement, although it was some time ere Jerry discovered the mistake he had made. It all began in this way,—

It was the Monday following the young clown's return to the show, which during the day had taken up its quarters at the busy market town of Greyton, where Mr Petman expected to even improve upon his late good business. It was a special engagement, the show to form one of the features of the People's Gardens lately opened there; to rise from the insignificance of a mere travelling circus to the dignity of a hippodrome, for this occasion only, namely, the length of one month certain, two if as successful as it was hoped.

The entertainment was in fact to be held, not as usual in a tent or building for the purpose, but in the open air, where extraordinary features both new and attractive were promised.

One of the greatest of these was to be races, which were to be run in a ring running round the reserved seats, and closed in by the free ones, which were raised to some feet above the rest; and were to be not simply ordinary races, but chariot races for ladies, and races for gentlemen on bare-backed steeds, in imitation of the Indians.

Much excitement was evinced in the show when news of all the wonders in which they were to take part were imparted to the company; for it had been the mighty Petman's will to keep the affair a secret till matters were thoroughly settled.

The show, with more secrecy than usually attended their movements, made their way into the town already mentioned, and fairly established themselves in the quarters assigned to them. This was on the Monday. As the gardens did not open until the following Wednesday, the manager had time to review his forces and get them into the required order. Truth to tell, though he gave it out as a "special engagement," the affair was hardly what the term implied. To put it plainly, the company really bespoken to occupy the ground had "gone all to smash," as the chairman of the committee of the gardens phrased it, and the many and big-

lettered announcements of the wonders it was to exhibit, which had for so long roused the inhabitants of the town on to the very tip-toe of expectation, were likely to prove so much waste paper.

What was to be done? It would never do to start so big a scheme by disappointing the public of one of the greatest features of the whole affair.

But who was to find a substitute for the wanting show?

Two or three offers were made to various managers, but "who under the sun," as declared one of the much-tried beings, very loath to let so magnificent a chance slip through his fingers, but, at the same time, hardly able to endow his already hard-worked troupe with the faculty for being in two places at once, "who under the sun could be expected to provide a company at such short notice?"

It seemed certainly as though the case were a perfectly hopeless one, and the committee men were in despair, tearing their hair and roundly abusing each other for having been induced to place their trust in any manager in the world.

But matters were not so dark as they appeared.

After allowing his fellows to do considerable damage to their various grey, auburn, and chestnut locks, a member of the committee who had no locks to tear came to the rescue, with a suggestion which just saved the worthy chairman from an untimely but romantic death by suicide.

"A lucky accident had just apprised him of the

presence of the Petman Circus at Grimston, the neighbouring market town."

Here the suggestion was interrupted by loud protestations against engaging a common travelling show. The projector of the scheme listened to these with cool contempt for some moments, then tried a little calm argument, and at last, as this would not silence them, burst out with, "Very well, then, gentlemen, you've heard my plan; any port in a storm, I say; you've pooh-poohed it, now get out of the hole as best you may. I'm not a shareholder, so if the pack of you go to the devil you won't drag me with you."

This plain-spoken but nevertheless truthful address had the desired effect.

No one likes to know he is on sinking sand at any time, but never less so than when some one within reach is in safety. Thus the entire committee were silenced and not a little awe-struck by the energetic address of their worthy brother, a state of affairs far more advantageous than their late excitement. Who can possibly think reasonably while every one around is talking and shouting as fast as their tongues will let them?

A few moments' interval ensued, during which several of the keener-sighted members made peace with their outraged brother, and begged him to place the whole of his scheme before them. After the application of a good deal of soft soap and giving way on several points which had been several times before contested by the entire committee of members from whose heads nature

had not yet removed the proper covering, and the gentleman with the bald scalp and great obstinacy, when he had set his mind on a thing, battles hitherto having ended in the ignominious defeat of the latter, who seemed now likely to take advantage of his victory to fight all his previous battles over again. But as time was precious, rather than allow him to do this, his elder brethren ceded the disputed points, and confessed secretly that if any wickedness went on in the gardens during the open-air concerts, illuminations in the Apollo's grove, dances in the moonlight, and such like alluring delights, Hackshaw, the persistent member with the bald head, was entirely responsible and not they.

They used to visit the gardens when the above abhorrences were in full swing, always refusing to allow sisters, wives, or any female relations to do the same (it was not exactly the place for ladies, though there were plenty of them did go), but this was only that the presence of some members of the committee should keep the doings in tone.

Of course, they always managed to do this, though one would have imagined the bald member's never-failing presence would have been sufficient, judging from the unflagging energy with which he chaperoned among the waving birch-trees any young lady who had been so unfortunate as to miss her way in the crowd, or found a charming widow, who came solely for the concert, a seat near the orchestra, from whence she

could see her husband blowing himself blind in his efforts to make the trombone prove its mastery over all other instruments. I may add that, in a chaotic interval of strings, after which, fortified by his few moments' rest, the trombone was to burst forth and entirely gain his end and that of all melody, the bandsman happening to catch sight of his widow with a certain bald head hovering in the background, he (the said bandsman) favoured her with an expansive grin and a most compressed wink—"Having a good time, eh?" he asked.

After this, Hackshaw gave up the widows, and tried young married ladies with two or three children, whom, meaning the children, he bribed, certainly silenced, for he nearly choked some of them with packets of butter-scotch—but enough of the abhorrences of this Israelite.

Let me return to the committee.

Having gained his ends and allowed himself to be pacified rather sooner than he would otherwise have done, the bald member (had his brethren only known the amount of wickedness contained in that shining globe, I should say hemisphere, for he did not, I imagine, carry his brains in front, in visage being one of the most harmless, childlike-looking old *paterfamilias* that ever knew how to enjoy himself) proceeded with great dignity to put the advantages of his scheme before the committee.

This he did at some length, declaring afterwards that hitherto he had listened to each of

them, now it was his turn, and he meant to pay off all debts, which I need hardly say he did.

Bless us, how the man did talk ; the committee was in despair, but were entirely helpless in his hands, having no course open to them but to listen quietly, without daring to interrupt.

The end of it all was, however—I will spare my reader the long and well-emphasized harangue, and come to the point—the end of it all was, a messenger was despatched with great secrecy and speed to the mighty Petman, who, after pleading prior engagements, word of honour, etc., promised to “do the job” at twice the sum he could have expected to gain by his prior engagements, which, as it may be guessed, existed purely in his own imagination, his show resembling in its process a bird that picks its food where it will, and lights on any spot likely to be the most fruitful.

This, then, was the real truth concerning the special engagement.

I have said the worthy Petman had consented to do the job ; he would have done so even, at the terms offered, if every member of his company was off work ; he’d have cured them and made them up to work rather than miss the chance.

As it was, however, he had not to exercise his medicinal skill, all the members of the show being in first-rate condition ; this was previous to Joe Turner’s visit to the cook-shop in the town, so he could then keep in a perpendicular position, he could pass muster with the rest ; but the manager

had, nevertheless, enough to do to get the forthcoming performance up to the required standard of perfection.

"Hang it," he said, when he read the announcements which met his eye wherever he turned, only half the promises of which rational people would expect to see fulfilled, "it means two turns for some of 'em, but hang me if I'll make it two screws."

And being a man of his word, as he always boasted, at first to the delight of those with whom he had to deal, but soon to their sorrow if he had them once in his power by means of the all-powerful agreement, he stuck to what he said.

His company was not a very big one, as we know, but he managed to press into service, at a very nominal salary, several hangers-on who were only too happy, of course, to work solely for the honour of so glorious an enterprise, the amusement of the worthy townsfolk, and the pleasure of writing one's name thus, "Signor Ragandboni, marvellous coin-swallower, will digest any coin, from a threepenny piece to a sovereign, which the audience care to bestow upon him. *N.B.*—Please not to offer him coppers, as they have a very injurious effect. Last engagement" (here's the point), "People's Gardens, Greyton."

These hangers-on, who were to comprise the new and powerful attractions, lost their robustness in a marvellously short space of time under the training which they were required to undergo, and

as for their "newness," how many of them would willingly have relinquished the right to ascribe that feature to their business, to have got through it as easily and comfortably as an old hand.

Glory was all very well, but it seemed to some of the "attractions" that if it was to be bought at the price of such complete damage to bodily person (five tumbles nightly, violently cheered by an admiring public, who seemed to look upon them as a particularly interesting feature of the entertainment, are hardly calculated to improve one's appearance), that was the only novelty in the whole affair.

How jolly it had seemed when sitting in a softly-cushioned reserved seat in full view of the whole performance, without so much as having to turn one's head, to see Mademoiselle Canine introduce her far-famed French poodles. Of course, it all came natural to the pretty little pets. "Never used a whip to one of them, ma'am. Kindness is the only way."

Kindness! What then is the meaning of that dismal howl which, at intervals, from ten till one in the day time, issues from the direction of the pets' kennels?

"One of the dogs not well, fretting for his mistress, always does so if she is late," which fretting results in Fido making his appearance at the next Saturday night show in a new trick, the "master" having declared his intention of giving Mademoiselle Canine's place to the famous cat-tamer

unless she can introduce some new feature into her performance.

She sets her wits to work, and behold, Master Fido saves her reputation by his wonderful performance—keeping his balance on the magic globe which is sent rolling down a spiral staircase.

Of course it is natural for a dog to do such things ; just as natural as a boy or girl to go to school without being dragged there, and of course animals have more common sense than human beings.

Then when Signor Lerini's well-trained Arab "Caraway"—presented to him by Prince Chutnee, in token of that gentleman's appreciation of his, the signor's, skill in having tamed a whole herd of wild ponies, and made them so docile as to more resemble dogs in their new habits than horses—died of stiffness of the joints and want of breath, who hinted that its third master, from whom the signor had bought him, had guessed he was well-nigh played out, and so palmed him off on his less shrewd brother ? What did a bird-catcher know of horse-kind ? Nothing. "Caraway" was nothing but a trick-horse, blind as a bat and stupid as an owl ; he had his tune, "The Bailiff's Daughter of Islington," and when that was being boomed into his ears, he didn't want any direction with the whip. That was all sham ! Why, he was loose one day, strayed away from the show during a rest, when the groom in charge was indulging in a quiet nap ; away he trots into the town ; in a crowded thoroughfare comes upon a barrel-organ

wheezing out "his tune," what does the sagacious animal do but begin trotting round and round the largest available open space, going up and down the middle, waltzing, marching, standing on its hind legs and pawing the air, and then when the organ man, in common with the rest of the terrified passers-by fled before him, quietly galloping back to the tents whence he came.

So you see the signor's work was comparatively easy, and he was just congratulating himself on being able ere long to cut his family and the show and retire into private life on his hardly-won earnings, with only the glory of the benefit he had conferred upon mankind by the exercise of his wonderful training powers upon brute creation, a portrait of his dearly-loved steed (also retired to private life, *i.e.*, been sold at an enormous profit to Casé the new world-renowned—all these people have most wonderful reputations—menagerie keeper—a trainer would rather starve than part with one of his pets, you know) in the place of honour above his fireplace, when, lo and behold, all his brilliant and unselfish plans were brought to nought by a most unexpected—(by his then master, not by his former one, who heard the news with fiendish glee, and to celebrate his forethought gave a supper-party to his friends with a small portion of the "tin" he had made out of the very brotherly transaction—he was only doing as he had been done by—in the middle of which feast he was suddenly called away to join a bigger one: to use the words of the immortal bard, if I

may appropriate them to so low a creature, "A supper not where he ate but—but where he was eaten")—all his then master's plans were brought to nought by a most unexpected event.

Long before Signor Lerini had even so much as paid back his bargain, much less laid by the little store on which he was to retire, the well-trained steed took the same idea into his head, and, without word or warning, not even so much as a parting kick, retired into private life himself, thus entirely upsetting all his master's views on the same subject.

As his first master pathetically remarked when he heard the news, "The big horse-dealer had got him at a bargain, and as it worn't" (the gentleman was a Spaniard, hence, I suppose, his peculiar pronunciation of our language) likely that they'd know 'The Bailiff's Daughter of Islington' where he'd gone, 'Caraway' 'd have a good time of it in about the biggest bit of grass-land to be had anywhere, judging by the number of trick horses and otherwise as 'd got loose and gone there." But the signor was too enraged to do anything but curse his ill-luck and swear round at every member of his family in turn, after which he seemed better, and quietly gave it out that henceforth each one of his offspring would have to help keep the pot boiling.

The true interpretation of this threat was kept dark during what I think I may fitly call a chaotic interval; it was so for the said family, who found themselves, with the assistance of an uncle in the

acrobat line, considerably mixed as to the possession of their legs and arms; sometimes seeming to have none which they could call their own, at others—a delusion, they were informed sternly, which naturally succeeded the former one—seeming to have double the required number. Gymnastics of a peculiar order are hardly calculated to promote ease to perform the ordinary movements of mortals; at least, so the little Lerinis found, and they did not speak, I assure you, without experience, the fruit of which was to be seen in the singular way in which they comforted themselves after their two hours' closeting with uncle.

They had, it was observed, a distinct dislike to do anything but lie on the floor and groan; a fact which convinced their worthy parent that they had been obliged to turn to none too soon; a little later, and as uncle put it, their muscles would have been set, and, like blanc-mange, there would have been no unsetting them.

The result, however, of all this mystification and suffering—this latter on the part of the young Lerinis—was the introduction to the show in the place of the defunct “Caraway” “of the famous Chili family in their world-renowned demon-act. Positively their first appearance in any show!” Such was the rather perplexing announcement on the posters, which set forth in blazing colours the news of the lately discovered, yet so strangely popular, genius.

These are only a few instances of the way our

great novelties spring up, and without staying to multiply examples, let me return once more to those in hand. The day before the opening of the People's Gardens was a busy one for all concerned; a day long remembered by the families of the committee men, who were nearly driven frantic in their anxiety lest all the fuss and bother should be too much for poor papa; he hadn't had a minute to himself, and dear mamma had completely broken down when a special messenger from Howitt's, the big haberdasher of the town, delivered at the house a good-sized packet, the contents of which, on being opened, were found to be a dozen of the best white ties, a corresponding number of pairs of gloves—varying in colour from brown to the most delicate lemon and lavender—and two silk handkerchiefs, which must have cost at least five shillings each, one a brilliant scarlet—papa, when he was young, had often been taken for an Italian or a Spaniard—the other a rich gold.

“Oh,” sobbed poor mamma, gathering her family round her like a distressed hen, on beholding the aforesaid articles, “it is as I feared; all this worry has turned your poor dear father's brain.”

Turned his brain! He'd turn the brain of that young man in Howitt's if he didn't listen to orders more attentively. Why, if only poor dear mamma had not been quite so full of grief as to be incapable of using her ordinary reasoning powers, the sending of those “helps to make us youthful and fascinating” might have led to all sorts of un-

pleasant consequences ; a family dispute at such a time was the very thing to be most carefully avoided.

Fancy if, alarmed by these outward and visible signs of inward wickedness, poor mamma had taken upon herself to inquire where he (papa) had scraped together enough money to buy shares in the company at all, it would be no use making another uncle die, for then mamma would insist upon the whole of the family going into mourning, and of course all gaiety would be out of the question ; and how was he to own to her face that this was the fourth quarter of her dowry he was making such good use of ?

It would be no use papa protesting *her* brain was turned, if she chose to act queerly ; she would know herself whether her mind and money were right or not.

I cite this example because it fitly shows how great was the excitement evinced on all sides concerning the opening of the "Great People's Gardens," which were to be such a boon to all pleasure seekers, and to make the fortunes of all concerned in a single week.

Yes, the excitement was very great, and none shared it more than the mighty Petman.

As he said at least a dozen times an hour, his reputation hung upon the affair, so far as his part of it went, being a success.

Everything must be in order, and up to the expectations aroused in the hearts of those who would assemble at the opening.

The circus must be made one of the great features.

For once, instead of only seeing others work, Mr Petman felt bound to put his own shoulder to the wheel, and I can tell you he did send the cart along at a rate.

Thus, on the already mentioned Tuesday, so long to live in the memory of all concerned, he issued orders for every member of the company to be present on the ground for a sort of rehearsal.

Then began a struggle between master and servants concerning over-work, which was settled by the worthy Petman by an argument so deep and forcible—likely to be more so if the subject was any farther pressed—that no one ventured to dispute it.

He maintained that each of the company was paid for single time; two performers in one act were not paid double, unless, of course, they could successfully occupy double time, which they usually contrived to do.

Now, as we have seen, Mr Petman saw that it would be necessary, to carry out his plans, or rather those of the committee, to combine his forces in the races, dances on horseback, and the great novelty, the rosette battle, of which more anon; that is, at least four ladies and gentlemen would be in the ring at a time, who, when they first heard of the new way their talents were to be utilised, imagined that this would severally constitute their “turn.”

But they were soon undeceived. The guv'nor

was not going to let others share the slice of good luck which without their aid he would have been unable to claim as his own ; he was not going to be such a fool as to pay four times as much for ten minutes' occupied time, not he. He had a little bit of arithmetic in answer to the loud and prolonged protestations this refusal called forth, which to him appeared unanswerable.

He maintained that it would be absolutely giving his money away—I doubt if he fully understood what that meant—to pay each member of the act performed in company with so many others, without whom the act could not take place, as much for his work as though he had had his or her single time and exerted him or herself as he or she would then be bound to do. No, indeed ; if four made up the act, could any lady or gentleman be so unfair as to say the time was all hers, or, by the same rule, that he or she had exerted themselves to such a degree as if they had occupied that time unaided ? He did not ask them to do this latter, and to the best of his knowledge no man, woman, or child had ever voluntarily done more work than he was obliged, so it was useless for any one to advance that as an objection.

From the nature of the worthy manager's argument, my readers will at once guess that if he was a diligent student in domestic economy, his knowledge of the political branch was small indeed.

No one, however, daring to stand up and refute

his statement by a direct appeal to the science in question, the manager went on to further apply his theory, the plain reasoning of which was that by agreement every member was to fill so much time in the ring. Now, if it pleased him to chop this said time up into sections of a few moments, and distribute the artist's talent in small pieces throughout the entertainment, there was no clause in the said agreement to prevent him so doing. Thus, for instance, hitherto Madame Fourteenstone had enjoyed an uninterrupted fifteen minutes for her act ; now she was cut down to ten, the remaining five to be distributed under various names of various nationalities, such as Miss Quickset, Mademoiselle Fragile, Signora Macaroni, and the champion huntress Diana, in the various complicated acts in which she played second, third, or fourth party ; the names, be it observed, chosen in accordance with the act to be performed by eight trained steeds, all old hands—or rather feet—at the business, which had been borrowed from a fellow manager by the energetic Petman. Quiet as lambs, every one of them, a baby could have made them perform, provided he whistled the various airs to which they had been trained.

As regards the names, I may say that as Miss Quickset, Madame Fourteenstone, in company with the Misses Hurdle, Waterjump, and Sunkenfence, was to take one of these spirited animals over various leaping appliances disposed at stated distances along the race-course ; as Mademoiselle Fragile to engage in the equestrian quadrille

and waltz ; as Signora Macaroni to urge on two of the same in a fiery chariot race ; and as Diana to take part in a steeplechase to be also held in the race-course, undertaking all these marvellous feats to fill out the time she had before occupied by her elephantine gambles on "The Star of the Evening," who was now to be driven, in company with every other pad horse, single-handed by the signor in the striking but rather inappropriate costume of Apollo, which he had been advised to adopt as one of the most likely to suit his build and personal attractions. Already the vain old man was picturing in his mind the glances of admiration he would elicit when his rather podgy figure, clad in the brightest pink fleshings, the most gorgeous green and gold tunic and body, a bow and arrow slung over his shoulder, and a wreath of immortelles—"Just as if any one will know them from cauliflowers," growled Jack Breakneck, on hearing this wonderful costume, a triumph of art indeed, described—twined in his long tow-coloured locks, which were to float gaily behind him as he assumed such poses as never mortal dared assume before in the rather unsteady position, standing upright on one steed while he drove the whole team six abreast at full speed round the race-course and, crowning point of all, over a hurdle about three feet high. The signor had voluntarily undertaken this performance, solely, he said, for the sake of adding to the fame of the show, but it was

well known really for the sake of satisfying his absurd love of flattery, for the admiration which he naturally expected the superb Apollo dress would obtain for him. This dress, he declared, had cost no end of money when he had had it sent straight from Paris to perform before the Crown Princess of Timbuctoo, who had fallen so deeply in love with him that his Highness the Crown Prince had offered him an enormous sum to quit the country and cease to disturb his wedded happiness.

Patchouli, as he said, whenever he could find anyone with sufficient patience to listen to his tale, refused the bribe, but left the country nevertheless.

"My friend," he would say, with a tragic air which sat but strangely on his corpulent figure, "my friend, I am a man of honour. I have never married, for fear my wife should be jealous of the honours I receive at fair hands; why, then, should I try and wreck the happiness of so open-hearted a gentleman as the Crown Prince proved himself to be? I do not deny if, in the glances which, try as I would to control, would pass between the royal lady and myself; if, I say, in them she had guessed that the dress which I wore was not ill-fitted to its wearer—I will not deny that for an instant, an instant worth more than a thousand ordinary years, I realised that her royal robes (ah, you may smile, Epsom; you would not had you seen her) could hardly have graced one more truly

a queen—I put the thought from me as though it were poison. I am a gentleman, sir; and so, thanking the Prince for his kindness, I went on my way, to see the Princess no more.”

And in token of the sincerity of what he said, the signor gently pressed his second finger and thumb to his eyelids—he had to suppress any more violent signs of emotion for fear of damaging his very ingenious make-up; tears would have taken from the carefully darkened eyelashes some of their raven glossiness, and might in their course have truly furrowed his beautifully tinted and powdered cheeks—and running his fingers through the abundant raven locks, dyed and arranged with an art any hairdresser might have envied had even he guessed they had been operated upon, turned away with a tragic little wave of his fat, white beringed hand, and spent the next half-hour trying to determine whether flaxen locks suited his complexion—or rather that with which he intended to endow himself—better than the raven ones he already possessed.

This, I may say, was a very difficult question, and was only decided in favour of the former after the whole of the company had given their voice in that way. But if the signor was willing to disport himself for the glory of the show, Madame Fourteenstone and the rest of the company did not take such a romantic view of the case.

However, as we have seen, Mr Petman knocked

down all their objections with his famous argument, and was so well satisfied with his own cleverness that, when Madame Petite suggested that the time spent in changing from one costume to another should be counted, he only told her very mildly to go and be blessed, and let the remark remain unanswered. One or two timid ladies next protested that they could not and would not undertake to ride strange horses, but were soon silenced, and advised that in all the wonderful feats they had to perform all they had to do was to stick on as gracefully as they could, and leave the rest to the horses.

Two or three of the new features were then run through, when those concerned found that, provided they could follow the advice given them, not quite as easy as it looked, they had nothing to fear. The trained steeds performed their parts with an unfailing precision which left nothing to be desired. As regards new costumes, which their double and triple duties demanded, the company was bidden see what they could get from the wardrobe ; but, as they knew of old, this meant provide for yourself, which they accordingly set about doing to the best of their ability and tastes.

Altogether it was a pretty good morning's work for every one, and not one of the company but was glad there was to be no performance that evening, but two on each of the days following, and that meant work for some, if not all of them ; not very hard work, you may say, so far

as actual physical exertion went, but there was the dressing in draughty dressing-rooms—mere sheds hastily thrown together—the waiting about for one's turn, in costumes hardly designed for out-doors, and then the “sticking” on as best one could and trying to look as if one liked it.

And during all this hurry and bustle of preparations, how had our friends fared?

Jerry was absent on some important mission for “the boss,” and only reached the ground just as the company had at last received permission to depart.

This they did with, you may be sure, the greatest alacrity, and Jerry, having reported himself to his master, did the same, taking with him Smith, to stand the poor fellow, who was quite knocked up, having been working like a horse for nine hours without a rest, a good dinner. Jerry had not been able to get so much as a sight of Lizette all day, but as he and the groom turned out of the gardens together, he saw before him two figures which he recognised as those of the ring-master and the little fancy rider.

Jerry did not even flinch at the sight—what did they tell him more than he knew?—but trudged on down the road as steadily as he meant to trudge through life, quite content to go his way alone, provided some one else was happy.

And the couple in front went on theirs, Lizette with her heart beating a thousand beats a minute, and her eyes full of that strangely beautiful light

which had betrayed her secret to her old friend, as she raised them shyly now and then to meet the glances, daily increasing in boldness, of her companion and countryman.

And he? With his thoughts he has alone the right to deal—but though he spoke on ordinary common-place subjects, looks and tones tell more than any amount of words.

So he and Lizette walked along as they had done very often lately, side by side down the street, chatting gaily, at least Carl did; Lizette, as was her wont at times, was rather shy and silent.

As they turned the corner of the street and paused, for only a few steps further on lay Lizette's lodgings, a cab rattled by with some luggage on the outside, while within was a lady, who, happening to glance from the window, noticed the young couple, and leaning forward, bowed graciously to them.

Carl Hermann lost the thread of what he was saying—a quotation from a poem on "Parting" that he had lately been reading—and responded by raising his hat with that peculiarly graceful bend of his head which became him so well.

"Who is your friend?" asked Lizette, following with her eyes the retreating cab, and noting absently that its occupant had leant forward so as to gain a second view of her and her companion.

"'Whoever trusts me in all things,' was the

reply, in the words of the poet of whom they had been speaking. As he spoke Carl Hermann gave the little ungloved hand which reposed so confidently in his a slight pressure, which made the foolish little heart throb, if possible, ten times faster.

"I meant who is the lady who gave you greeting?" said Lizette, keeping her eyes fixed on the pavement, an advised caution, for they would sparkle in a manner which might have betrayed the secret which as yet she scarcely knew she possessed.

"The lady—in the cab you mean? Don't you know? Ah, I forgot, she has not been with us since you came. She is Miss Petman."

"I seem to know her face, yet I have forgot where I can have seen it."

Small wonder you cannot remember, little Lizette, when your foolish little heart gives such a jump at the admission that someone remembers how long it is since he first saw you; small wonder you cannot recall the face, for you have only room for one in your silly little mind, and that is one with clear-cut, regular features, unmistakably handsome, and lit up by a pair of clear grey eyes which can flash and grow soft and tender so dangerously at times; small wonder when your heart is full of the almost incomprehensible (such a child you are in your joy as in your sorrow) happiness of the present that you see no cloud stealing over the blue sky—a cloud which in time may assume dimen-

sions such as you never dreamt of until the storm broke.

But there, why should I, old raven that I am, be so ready to begin croaking?

There is time enough to talk of trouble when it comes—do not let us meet it half-way.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE GRAND HIPPODROME.

PROGRAMME.

WEATHER PERMITTING.

1. THE famous Jelli and Boneless families in their wonderful tumbling performance.
2. Equestrian quadrille and waltz by four ladies and four gentlemen mounted on Signor Rostroni's thoroughbred horses—clowns, Merry-go-Round and Jerry (especially engaged).
3. Indian race, by riders in costume, on bare-backed steeds.
4. Horizontal bar performance, by W. and H. Breakneck—clown, Little Tomtit.
5. Flat race for ladies.
6. Miss Rosa Petman will exemplify the *manège*, or school of riding, introducing her renowned highly-trained steed, "Daystar."
7. Madame Terrilli will introduce her troupe of French poodles, whose performance has been witnessed by most of the crowned heads of Europe.
8. Roman chariot race; pairs of the renowned Petman Arabs, driven single-handed by ladies.
9. Little Jumbo, introduced by Patti.
10. Donkey race by clowns, Jerry, Tomtit, Merry-go-Round, and Here-we-are-again.

Such was the programme set forth for the first performance of the mighty hippodrome of the People's Gardens.

In the ante-room various and great signs of preparation made themselves apparent, and after so many and startling announcements, public expectation was even more than on tiptoe—some of the audience, in point of fact, standing on the highest elevation attainable, and at last the crimson curtains, which had been freshly emblazoned with gold lace and fringe, the initials C. P. displayed in dazzling brightness in the centre, were parted by two black boys—their costumes certainly “barbarous,” only marred by the smallness of the “negro” frizzy wig, which allowed a little of the natural covering of the heads beneath to become visible—to give entrance to four heralds blowing a more than usually shrill blast upon their silver trumpets, with the intent, no doubt, to recall any wandering attention—if such existed, which, judging from one sweeping glance at the perfect sea of faces on all sides, did not seem likely.

These heralds, their blasts successfully concluded, having ranged themselves in couples on either side of the entrance, the black boys again drew aside the curtains, and the band—which, had it not been for a slight confusion and mixture of uniforms, might have passed for a real *bonâ fide* military affair, engaged for the occasion—but perhaps this same irregularity lent a glamour of novelty to the whole, variety is charming—issued forth playing with great gusto, “See the conquering hero comes,” and so playing made the tour of the race-course with great dignity—which was

an outer circle outside the ring, ranged round which were the reserved seats, beyond these the course already mentioned, and beyond this again the raised free seats—and then took their places in the enclosure set apart for them.

Then from the ante-room came a cluster of ring men and grooms, the former in new (to them) costumes of high boots, white breeches, and scarlet coats; the latter for once in uniform groom attire; following them Mr Petman himself, in all the glory and dignity of evening dress, advanced to receive the acknowledgment of the audience—the self-complacent bearing of the man being sufficient to assure the public that something good might be expected. The manager having made his bow, retired; the visible management of the affair was in the ring-master's hands, he seeming to go through his duties as though thoroughly used to the grandeur and display which was so imposing; but everyone concerned knew well enough that the ruling spirit was rampant in dress clothes in the ante-room.

Firmly believing in the old proverb in this instance, "If you want a thing done, do it yourself," Mr Petman proved himself a perfect magician in the art of managing. He was here, there, and everywhere; keeping his people in order, and ruling everything and everybody with an iron hand.

There was no fear of him being "fooled" by anyone he chose to trust; he looked after them too well for them to do anything but honestly by him.

Now he was checking the tickets, now personally arranging for the introduction of new seats, determined to cover every inch of available space with money; and now mounting guard in the ante-room, to see that every preparation had been made that was necessary for the coming performance.

If ever a man worked for success it was Charles Petman; but yet, in spite of his exertions, when he stepped into the ring in all the dignity of his evening dress, white tie, and gloves, no one recognised in him the infuriated little man who, only a few moments before, had hunted about the poor worried attendants, and taken such an active part in the management of the whole concern. To the audience he was all smiles and graciousness; to his company, no doubt overcome by the dignity of the occasion, he was as savage as a bear—although, to do them justice, there was not the slightest occasion for him to have been so.

But he seemed to think an extra amount of hard words and harder swearing became his position, so therefore indulged in them rather more freely than was his wont, which meant some amount of work for his tongue, I can tell you.

Having made his bow to the audience, and impressed them all as a most affable, good-tempered-looking manager, he vented his spite in the ante-room on everybody that came within hearing, because, owing to the press upon space, the audience was somewhat late in getting settled.

Mr Petman having retired, there was silence for

a few moments—long enough to raise curiosity to the highest pitch—then at a given signal the heralds announced some new feature; the black boys had scarcely time to draw aside the curtains, the band to strike up, than head over heels, hand over hand, like so many Catherine wheels, out bounded eight agile figures, from two to six feet in height, clad in fleshings and trim satin tunics, and in a moment the ring was the scene of “outside in inside out,” going upstairs, coming down again, a new way of making a ladder, and such like boneless performances, a perfect chaos of legs and arms meeting one’s gaze, till it seemed as if so many windmills, and not human beings, disported themselves before one’s gaze.

Meanwhile the Jelli tumblers were going through their performance in a manner which ought to have put any manager in a good temper.

They occupied in a most creditable manner the ten minutes allotted to them, though there being two families together to make the “performance” more imposing, this only counted as half that period of time from a financial point of view—a fact which made one doubtful whether the boneless beings were not also devoid of sense to exert themselves with so much apparent vigour for the very small sum which would be all that would fall to their share.

But the case was not as it appeared. Neither of these very united families—who certainly deserved the name for the determined way in which they clung together—was a family at all.

The dear little fellows who aid their so-called "father" in his performance are merely wandy little chaps he has picked up, or in some cases lads offered to him to train in the way they should go in the tumbling line, in every case apprentices bound to him for a certain time, usually till they are twenty-one, in which case, since the training, if it is to begin at all, must do so at the early age of six or seven, earlier if any special feat lately discovered is to be the future acrobat's *forte*, it will be seen the binding was no mere pretence.

As a rule, however, for this apprenticeship the terms were not money down for training—in most cases there was none to give—but owing to the length of time the apprentice was bound, his keep was all he was allowed; that, you may be sure, meant a very nominal sum, hardly calculated to inspire saving propensities, and until he reached his twenty-first year his services were entirely at his master's disposal.

Of course the "father" must be rewarded for the trouble and time spent in training unruly young limbs, but considering how unequal the share of labour was, one would certainly imagine he had the best of it.

The training once over, all the trainer had to do was to introduce himself and family under a new name to the tumbling world, to give the performance the support of his presence, and now and then the support of his massive figure to the whole of the said family; even this he only ventures to do on grand occasions, for success is fatal

to sprightliness when one has been made in the days of youth to study the art of denying oneself for two reasons, one the necessity of keeping agile, the other and all-sufficient one, inability to afford luxuries, another advantage of the agreement; and once freed from the hateful bond, it is little wonder so many promising votaries of the ring sink into the happy oblivion of an enlarged liver and such like corpulency.

Thus the "father," having long since given up earning a livelihood for other people, had evidently taken the same view of the matter as most of his fellows, and now determined to do as he was done by—make others support him.

To this end he set up his family, which somehow, had any one noted the fact, never seemed to grow up. No sooner had one member attained his majority than there was some little unfortunate ready to take his place, and at the daily performance only gave it the dignity of his presence, and while, with a skill worthy of a better cause, deceiving the spectators into the belief that he alone deserved their applause, acknowledged it with a graciousness which rather added to than diminished the delusion.

In the present instance, the occasion of the first performance in the Gardens, it was comical to see how each head of either family claimed, from force of habit, the loud appreciation of the antics of their various offspring, and on leaving the ring it was at first a question of who should have the last bow, had it not been for the fact that Jack,

the youngest tumbler, aged two years and a half, failed to make a success of his exit, that is, broke down in his wheel; the poor lad, indeed all his brothers too, were rendered by their exertions so crimson in the face that a general attack of apoplexy seemed more than probable, unless, as seemed likely on Jack's part, he was a victim to his father's rage at his disgraceful failure in his wheel, which led that worthy to forego the honour of a last stately bow, in order to ensure the capture of the unfortunate Jack before he had time to make good his escape.

That little slip—in reality due to a shabby trick of one of the elder lads, who, only the week before, had been in disgrace for having twice essayed to get upstairs, and, in spite of the encouragement very kindly bestowed by the generous audience upon his efforts, becoming so nervous that the feat had to be abandoned—meant two hours' practice for the poor little youngster, who, at the age when most lads are allowed to run about by themselves, was so resolutely made to learn that there were other uses for arms and legs than those to which they were put by ordinary mortals.

In spite of this slight mishap, which did not escape the vigilant eye of the manager—his remarks on the subject not by any means likely to make the unhappy little tumbler's punishment of a lighter kind—the tumbling was pronounced a great success.

A moment's breathing time was allowed, and

then the trumpets sounded forth once more, and out from the ante-room dashed the riders who were to form the equestrian quadrille: the ladies in sweeping robes of various-coloured velvet, profusely trimmed with fur, in imitation of Russian style; the gentlemen in costumes to correspond—a novel feature specially devised for the occasion.

The effect was very pretty, the band playing gaily, and the well-trained horses going through all the figures of the dance with an ease, grace, and docility which won well-merited applause.

"It looks very easy," as more than one spectator remarked, "but, lor', it must have taken a lifetime to have got into the way of that."

But then you see they did not know how the trick was done, and evinced the greatest delight when the dancers backed their steeds from the ring and disappeared from view.

During this performance two clowns had quietly made their way round the outside of the ring and seated themselves on the ledge close together, paying the most marked attention to every movement of the dancers, applauding loudly between the figures, much to the amusement of all the youngsters and, indeed, many of the old folks among the audience. At the close of the last figure, however, of the quadrille some dispute arose, and the two moved apart between every interval of their frantic applause, moving a few steps farther until, as a natural consequence, but apparently to their own surprise, they came

into collision opposite the spot whence they started.

The abruptness of this meeting caused a sharp dispute, which was interrupted by the equestrian dancers' exit, whereupon the two became friends and discussed the art of dancing, one of them loudly regretting his inability to trip it on the light fantastic toe, to which the other made answer, "It was truly strange that horses could dance so well and yet a donkey could not make one step." This, again, led to a squabble and a fight, which was interrupted by the interference of one of the ring men.

He called the two to order, and when they both began loudly giving him their side of the story, to quiet them he proposed that one should teach his companion to dance. This it was agreed should be done, but the pupil persisted he wanted to learn to dance like a lady. So a portmanteau was produced, with the contents of which he effected a complete transformation. A green silk skirt with a long sweeping train was slipped over his head; a white garibaldi, with a red and gold Zouave jacket, took the place of a bodice; the whole completed by a fair wig, the long flaxen curls of which, crowned by a mass of artificial flowers, hung to the waist, and were coquettishly arranged over one shoulder.

Thus attired, the master led his pupil into the middle of the ring, and began initiating him—I mean her—in the art of step-dancing, curtsy-making, and such like.

As may be guessed, the attempt was hardly successful. The fair *danseuse* found the long train of her robe considerably in her way, and in her frantic attempts to imitate her teacher and make a graceful curtsey, her feet frequently became entangled, and a fall was the only result. By-and-bye, however, by dint of great perseverance, she began to improve, and straightway desired her master to find her a partner; she meanwhile seated herself, simpering and gushing behind her fan.

The partner was produced in the shape of a dummy dressed like one of the ring men. He was led, or rather dragged, up to the lady, who, after a good deal of simpering and excusing herself, was at last induced to accept his offer to dance.

Then followed some fun at the young lady objecting to the gentleman's arm being placed round her waist.

"Oh no, I daren't. He mustn't do it. Mamma'd be so angry if she knew it. Oh no, please don't."

At length, however, this objection was overruled, and the pair started.

Roars of laughter echoed on all sides as the gentleman continually lost his balance and had to be restored to a perpendicular position by the master. Then the lady again found her train impede her progress, until it was proposed to tuck it up round her waist, to which proposition she joyfully assented. And now the dance began in earnest.

Inspired with the idea of distinguishing herself, the lady seized her partner round the waist and whirled him round the room in a mazy waltz, until it seemed hardly possible the dummy could survive the test whole.

The end was beyond description, but it was a very breathless, panting clown, who, with a torn skirt, wig all awry, and one of the dummy's arms wrenched from its socket and still clasped round his waist, responded to a perfect roar of applause by appearing to curtsy no less than four times.

The performance could hardly be described as graceful, refined, or instructive; but, as Mr Petman argued, it pleased the audience, and that was sufficient reason for giving it.

And certainly he was right as far as the gratification of the spectators was concerned—it was just the sort of thing they liked. Indeed, they would have insisted on its repetition had it not been for the ring-master signalling to the heralds to announce the next item on the programme, who appeared in the shape of the North American Indians, whose make-up and costumes certainly did them much credit.

Ranged in a line at the starting-post, there seemed to be but little difference between them, and much fun was occasioned, bets being made as to how many “riders” would safely reach the goal.

This conjecture was not ill-founded, for the steeds were bestrode bare-backed and without

any sort of bridle or harness whatever—nothing at all to catch hold of.

This truly appeared a case of “sticking on,” but before the first round of the ring was made two riders had given up the attempt, contenting themselves with limping back to the starting-post amidst the jeers and laughter of the audience. From the moment of the start, however, there was no doubt about the winner; a splendid grey horse, whose rider seemed to be stuck on rather than stick to his back, tore along the ground at a pelting pace, leaving his companions far behind. This triumph the jockey—he it was—seemed to take very coolly, not at all sharing in the general excitement which signalled his success—for put him on his well-known “Daredevil,” and there was very little chance to any one else of coming in first—the horse went like the wind when his master chose, while it was the general opinion in the company that the jockey could have stuck on a “greased pig,” as Merry-go-round not too gracefully expressed it. So his companions merely contested for the place of second.

The ring servants made great preparations for the next item on the programme, with the show and bustle with which these officials usually go about their work—a trait in their character seemingly assumed with their liveries.

In a few moments the horizontal bar was erected, and to the usual announcement of a flourish of trumpets, the Breakneck brothers,

gorgeously, if slightly, clad in scarlet and gold, made their appearance.

They were fine, strapping young fellows, and well up to their business.

Their turn over, the trumpets again sounded, and for the ladies' flat race six ladies mounted on Signor Patchouli's well-trained steeds made their appearance.

The riders were dressed in white cotton habits, with coloured jackets and jockey caps to distinguish them—red, light and dark blue, yellow, green, pink, violet, and mauve—the effect, as they held their steeds reined up at the starting-post, being very pretty indeed.

This racing was quite a novelty to both racers and spectators, and not a little excitement was evinced on both sides as to who should win this, the first competition.

One or two meant merely to follow the manager's advice and "stick on," thinking that would be quite sufficient; but some few of the others, as they heard on all sides surmises as to who would really come off victorious, and not a few daring bets being made first on one colour and then on the other, sat well back and held the reins well in hand.

One rider, on a beautiful but rather fiery-looking brown horse, pronounced by those of the spectators who presumed to be able to judge the best of the bunch, seemed especially to delight in her work.

She wore a scarlet jacket, the bright colour of

which suited her clear complexion well ; and not a few of the mankind among the audience, especially those in the free seats near the starting-post, decided that she made a very pretty picture, with her round childish face, deep brown eyes, dimpled cheeks, and soft curly brown hair falling from under the trim little jockey hat.

In fact, Fräulein Lizette Hartzman, "red" as she was announced on the programme, heard her colour being pitted not a little freely against the rest, and though she tried hard to look unconcerned, a bright colour burnt in her cheeks, and the brown eyes sparkled dangerously.

Nor did either of these grow dim when, as the riders waited for the start, the groom holding the horse's head whispered to her some directions about keeping to the inside of the circle if possible, for which she thanked him with a smile which made a warm flush of pleasure flood the ugly scarred face of her adviser ; nor when one of the ring men, hastily arranging his necktie as he issued from the tent—a very quick change that for one who did not profess to be "quick" at anything—but the young clown, for it was the fair dancer of a few moments before once more transformed, this time into a nearer approach to a rational being, made his way to her side, nodded cheerily to her, arranged her habit more gracefully, and in his turn appeared to question the groom concerning the fastening. The "red" rider seemed to re-assure him, and then he turned away to assist one of the other ladies who had been less

well looked after than her companion; her stirrup being so long and she being somewhat short and stout, it seemed a matter of question whether, far from coming in first in the race, she would even be able to "stick on."

While assisting the lady to alight that the stirrup might be shortened, the clown's place was taken by the young ring-master, considered by the female portion of the audience as far handsomer than any man in the audience (this in return for the favour shown to the scarlet-jacketed lady jockey), a tall, slight-figured young fellow, distinguished from those under him by the gilt star he wore and the long whip in his hand.

Playing with this, he stood patting the horse upon which the favourite lady jockey rode, she bending her head to catch what he said, he looking up at her with looks which spoke more than all his words.

He seemed to be asking for a sprig of geranium which she wore at her throat, and she in return shyly tendering him one blossom, which he fastened in his coat, an act which made the betting in favour of the giver run up to a neat little sum, and he trying to extract some promise.

"I will come with you if I win."

"I am not afraid to show my colour then," returned the young ring-master, adding, in a low undertone which made one inquisitive about words which would otherwise have been totally meaningless, "You will win the race, as you have my heart."

"Have I done so?" was the shy question.

"Is it possible I could help surrendering? You do not know yourself or you would not question what I say. You doubt me!"

"Nein, nein, it is not so, truly!"

"You are too good to say so." Then, lower still, "One day I will prove to you what I say."

At this moment the last racer was got in the line, and Jerry drew on one side, hardly at the time knowing how deeply those few words, the first of the kind he had overheard, had impressed themselves on his memory, to be recalled when he would have given worlds to have forgotten them.

The ring-master also drew on one side, fired the pistol, and away went the racers.

The circle of the ring was to be made twice, but long before the round was half made the whole audience was on their feet, eagerly cheering and encouraging those whose colours they had chosen.

"Light blue's first!" "Yellow's the girl for me!" "I'm on green!" "Dark blue for ever!" "Go it, pink!" "Bravo, red!"

This last at length overtopped all, coupled with that of yellow—our old friend Madame Petite—who also, I may say in confidence, had been promised some treat by her admirer, George Epsom, provided she distinguished herself during the day.

The little French lady was in high spirits, and although not having so many cavaliers to look after her welfare as her German friend, had yet

the advantage of all the rest (save the "red") in the remembrance of the same promise in being by far the lightest weight, and having besides a knowledge of riding which her companions did not possess.

Her one rival, then, was Lizette, and, as it soon appeared, a formidable one.

After the first round, as has been seen, these two distanced the rest—the race, in fact, lying between them, the others keeping up a show for the sake of appearances.

Yellow having been placed on the inner side, had naturally an advantage of red, who was on the very outside edge; but acting on the groom's good-natured hint, made early efforts to improve her position. This she succeeded in doing, only, however, to find Madame Petite fully a yard in front of her, and so great was the distance that the case seemed hopeless; but as her supporters soon saw, the scarlet jockey did not mean to surrender until really defeated: she pressed her steed forward determinedly, every effort being greeted with applause and cries from those who claimed her colours, but at first to little purpose: the little Frenchwoman was equally resolute. Nearer and nearer came the winning-post, where a little crowd of ring men and grooms eagerly watched the contest.

"Yellow keeps the lead! Red's gaining, though! Look, another six inches! Bravo yellow, you'll do it easy! Let her go, red; she'd win, I'd lay a wager, if the girl'd only give her her head! You

leave her be for knowing what she's up to. There, I told you so! By Jove! neat little bit, wasn't it? Held him in so as to let the other woman waste her horse, then gave him a little tickling with the whip, and shot past the post easy as greased lightning—the other woman nowhere. Bravo, bravo, red! plucky girl! She *can* ride. That's the sort of girl for me! Bravo! Amid such loudly-uttered exclamations the pretty little scarlet-jacketed jockey won the race—verifying the ring-master's assertion, as Jerry thought sadly, even as he answered the victorious racer's gay nod with a smile and cheery “bravo,” and then drew aside to let others offer their congratulations.

It was a pretty sight to see the winner skim by the post with an ease and grace many a boasted trained rider might have envied, and then rein in a few yards beyond and allow the groom Smith, his face positively aglow with delight, to lead her to the easily-gained front, there, amidst the cheers of the audience and fellow professionals—indeed, of all who had witnessed her little manoeuvre—to receive the whips of her vanquished sisters.

This little ceremony the winner seemed to be willing to forego, but Mr Petman had ordered that it should be gone through, and from his position in the ante-room he watched with his eagle eye to see that all his directions were faithfully carried out. All the same, Lizette hung back a little; but the young master, pushing Smith on one side, himself led her horse forward, and took the whips one by one from her as she received them with a

half deprecating bend of her head, to be returned by her on the morrow, prior to the commencement of the same race, thus to take the form of a challenge, and point out the winner of the day before. A pretty little ceremony, so gracefully yet simply was it arranged, thought all the spectators. All? No, not all—all save one.

That one a tall, fine-looking girl who, clad in a plain velvet habit and beaver hat, stood within the ante-room talking to Mr Petman, with whom she was apparently on very familiar terms.

She was a stranger to the show, and evidently by her bearing not one of those pressed into the service, or belonging to it for glory's sake; for there was an unmistakable air of hauteur—more correctly, I think I should say swagger—about her which, though it did not suit her fine figure badly, stamped her at once as some one who had no low opinion of herself and capabilities.

She had watched the race with a lazy interest, and smiled superciliously as she watched the defeated racers approach to surrender their whips, but became so much interested as to advance a step or two, in order to get a better view when the young ring-master himself led the victorious jockey to receive the acknowledgment of her companions' defeat.

This done, Lizette would have retired with the rest, but was so loudly applauded that Mr Petman hastily sent word that she had better make the tour of the ring in acknowledgment.

This she did, riding at a sharp trot, bowing on

either side and smiling gaily, completing the conquest she had begun—indeed, having won the race, succeeding in winning all hearts.

If the little German girl had wanted a cavalier to take her to see the fireworks later on in the day, and not have been “particular” in who or what he was, she might have had at least a score; but as it was, even had she not been as she was, “particular,” that is, never by any chance allowing herself to accept attentions from strangers, a practice of which she had a deep-rooted horror, though all her companions were not so inclined—indeed openly laughed at her “silliness” in losing a chance of having fun, but in secret looking upon her as not a little superior to themselves; even, I say, had she not been “particular,” as it was, she did not want a cavalier, being already provided.

Had she not won the race? That, according to her promise made a few moments before, meant that she was going to allow herself a little quiet enjoyment with an old friend, who, in token of her promise, was to receive the flower he had hitherto been refused.

Why did not Jerry then press forward? I suppose he knew, but he certainly made no attempt to take up his usual office, but, seeming determined to be busy, hastened into the ante-room to see after the Breaknecks’ appliances.

Meanwhile the scarlet jockey had completed her tour of the ring, and once more the young ring-master’s hand was on her horse’s bridle as he led

it, amidst one deafening cheer from winners and losers, all alike charmed by the fairness of the rider, into the ante-room.

Yes, Lizette looked indeed very fair, very sweet; she had indeed charmed all hearts, although in those few steps before the ante-room was gained the artiste was deaf to all applause, deaf to all sounds but the whisper in her ear of soft endearing words, doubly sweet because they were uttered in her own language.

She had been shyly delighted before, but now she dare not even move her eyes from the whip which she held; she dared not, with those words in her ears, meet the glance of those deep-grey eyes which were raised so earnestly to her face, drinking in greedily the sweetness of the face above. Full of thoughts which yet she dared not understand until the lips which gave them utterance in words, which, though the flattery in which they wasted precious moments was sweet, should be more than all the praises of her beauty and fairness, nothing beside the proof he had said he would give that he was true. True, that meant "true to himself, and that to everything a man should be;" that was how little Lizette interpreted the word, for though they had been friends so long, these two compatriots, one at least did not guess what Jerry already knew, and she did not put the same meaning on the words as did the heart that beat so "truly" in her cause; she did not know that there could be words sweeter to her ears than those which told her some one

thought she was beautiful. He had said so often before, although she had protested it was not true—it was not right of him to tell fibs—but never so “fervently,” almost passionately, as to-night, words which told her that some one was pleased with her—very, very pleased.

Well, and was not everyone in that vast throng exerting themselves to convince her that they concurred in the judgment? Ah, yes! but then—

Why was it at this point Lizette always came to a full stop, and began a fresh sentence? So, then, she was more than satisfied with her triumph, and as the curtains of the ante-room closed behind her, she waited for a moment before dismounting, as though loath to think the pleasure all over, while Smith, the groom, stood by with a rather sulky look on his face, which it was hard to understand.

The poor fellow had been the little fancy rider's devoted slave, for though, as his comrades affirmed, “he was not quite right in his head,” he had sense enough to look upon the only woman in the world who had ever deigned to speak kindly to him as something little short of an angel, and to devote himself to her with a slavish adoration which even Jerry himself could not have equalled. Weak as his intellect was, there was yet one firmly-fixed point in his mind, and that was that he owed his life to the little fancy rider, for he verily believed that in his rage the jockey would have struck him dead, and though more than once before that event he had been heard to wish he were dead and buried

—that is, out of the way of the ill-treatment which he received on all sides—he seemed now to be quite content to live, that he might be of service to his benefactor.

His love, if such it may be called, was that of a dog for his master, but, all the same, one other instance of the charm which little Lizette exercised over those around her.

There was one strange thing about the groom—he seemed to have conceived a sort of canine dislike to the young ring-master; why, it was impossible to tell, for the young German had never harmed him by look or deed, yet, all the same, a keen observer might have noted the look of suspicion and distrust which settled on his ugly face as Carl Hermann took his place by Lizette's side. Jerry alone had noticed it once before during the day, but had put it down to the poor wretch's dislike to anyone rendering his little mistress a service besides himself, though, to be sure, the look was never there when Jerry undertook the office. But there, there was no accounting for likes and dislikes, especially in a brain like poor Smith's.

So, unconscious of any disagreeable impression that he had created, the young ring-master lingered long by Lizette's side.

Thus, as between this race and the next feature was an interval of five minutes, during which time the officials retired into the ante-room, where, as a joker in the free seats informed his neighbours, it was "just a treat to see the old chap in the

evening toggery rounding on 'em," about something which had not gone exactly as he wished, the men, however, seemingly quite used to the process, and receiving the harangue like lambs; to see one of the grooms doing his best to keep in order the clever French poodles, who were yelping and snapping in fine style, their mistress, a fat ugly woman, gaudily dressed, putting the finishing touches to her make-up at the glass; two clowns vigorously practising a new trick in one corner, with a sober earnestness which rendered their comicality doubly droll, and would make a big hit if they allowed it to take the place of the bounce and bluster which usually make their fun lose its point; and one of the late lady-riders, assisted to dismount by one of the ring men, the horse led away by a groom, who seemed to take great pride in it, while the rider stood for some moments conversing with her cavalier, he delaying her so long that the heralds had already announced the end of the interval before the two seemed aware how time was flying.

Even then, they seemed loath to return to their duty, and although one of the grooms led forward a splendid roan, and the tall fine-looking girl in a velvet habit and beaver hat stood waiting for some one to help her to mount, it was not until she had glanced round more than once that the *tête-à-tête* was broken up, and the young fellow, with a parting nod to his companion, turned in her direction. But when he proffered his help she coldly declined it, and putting one hand on

the groom's shoulder sprang lightly into the saddle.

The next moment the attendants flocked into the ring, the band struck up, and at a pretty good pace the young lady followed them.

Her performance, though hardly as exciting as those which preceded it, was nevertheless a very interesting one, and the complete power she had over her very high-spirited steed, won her well-deserved applause.

In obedience to a touch of her hand on its bridle, the well-trained animal marched and waltzed in time to the music, stood on three legs pawing the air with the fourth, knelt and pirouetted, jumped hurdles and formed a circle, keeping its fore feet crossed, then going out into the race-course, leapt a hastily-erected hedge and supposed brook of considerable breadth with a neatness that was enthusiastically applauded.

But the crowning feat of all was when, backing the animal towards the ante-room, the girl caused it to rear repeatedly, pawing the air with its fore feet, she retaining her seat the while as easily as though the repeated plunges had not made it a matter of the greatest difficulty.

Madame Terrilli's performance was hardly as great a success as the rest of the programme. The trainer herself was by no means a very attractive-looking lady, added to which, the French poodle had been somewhat overdone. The public wanted something fresh, and a regular army of elephants, monkeys, and even cats, were

entering the field and dealing death-blows to the once highly-lauded poodles' chances.

But for the announcement that almost all the crowned heads in Europe had watched the antics of the yelping curs, it is doubtful if they would have been received at all; as it was, the audience was in too good a temper to do anything but tolerate what they did not certainly appreciate.

Following Madame Terrilli's bow, the appearance of the Roman chariots caused great excitement.

These were big, rather clumsy-looking concerns, somewhat resembling the new-fashioned milk carts; the bottom of the car being but a few inches from the ground; the wheels, of considerable size, rising level with the sides; the fronts slightly bowed, with a cushion along the inner side, for the driver of course to stand in the car in real Roman fashion, and one pole only being used.

They were gaudily painted and gilded in a somewhat modern style, while to each was harnessed a pair of horses which, unused to having such cumbersome vehicles in their wake, fidgetted uneasily as the grooms held them in the required line. It seemed hardly probable that women should undertake the not very easy task of piloting these chariots—for in the narrow space there was great danger of getting the wheels locked, to say nothing of the dangers to which unruliness on the part of one charger might expose the others.

Nevertheless the race was put down as one for

ladies, and these soon made their appearance, four in number, and clad in loose flowing garments, presumedly in imitation of the matrons they represented. Two of them, a slight-figured girl and a rather oldish woman, were talking earnestly as they issued from the ante-room, and on reaching the starting-post, before taking her place, the former, in spite of protestations on the part of the groom, assisted her companion into the chariot nearest the inner circle, drawn by two fine black and dark brown horses, reserving for herself that to which were harnessed two by no means so prepossessing in appearance.

The result was the winning of the race by the black and brown pair, when the young girl, who was only able to urge her steeds into a very feeble gallop, and even then came in last of all, only smiled gaily at the jeers of the audience, who seemed somehow to have expected more of her, and while owning her defeat by surrendering her whip to the winner, appeared to congratulate her heartily, and refuse to listen to a word of depreciation.

For at first, the little old woman—for such she appeared in spite of the yellow wig, paint and powder, which the broad daylight showed up so plainly—seemed inclined to be discontented about her victory, until one of the ring men, whom the audience recognised as the winner of the Indian race, leant over the railings and spoke to her.

A flush, visible even under the artificial bloom, rose to her face, and when in acknowledgment of

the applause she made the circle of the race-course alone, she urged the horses to a fine pace, and made the clumsy chariot thunder along over the uneven ground in fine style.

The tricks of Little Jumbo came next, and following these the four clowns ran their race in a manner which elicited roars of laughter.

To begin with, the jockeys seemed many sizes too big for their steeds, their feet almost touching the ground.

In spite of this, however, two of them were unable to retain their seats even by grasping their steeds tightly round the neck, the result of which manoeuvre was to send them—much to the amusement of the spectators—head over heels over the animals' heads. Two were thus served, but the remaining couple went steadily on their way, and all went well, until the leader suddenly exhibited to the full his oft-quoted propensity for having his own way.

He resolutely refused to stir in spite of all efforts, and his master with many gestures of dismay saw his rival gaining steadily on him.

In vain he pulled, dragged, and even pushed it, the obstinate animal refused to stir; but, just when all hopes of his ever being induced to stir another step seemed gone, his would-be rider seemed seized with a sudden idea. Diving into the depths of his voluminous trousers pocket he produced and triumphantly held aloft a fine carrot, which he had evidently secured in case of an emergency. Seizing his obstinate steed's bridle,

he held the bribe a few inches from its nose, and as the animal was keenly alive to the desirableness of the reward offered, he very quickly followed in its wake, reaching the winning-post amidst the laughter and applause of the audience.

With this little incident the show ended; but, so successful was it pronounced that the committee men personally congratulated Mr Petman, who set to work to make room for nearly a hundred more seats in the monster tent already prepared for the evening performance.

Of this there is no need to give any details save that in every sense it was a success. Audience and performers were in high spirits, especially the latter. The signor, whose "act" had been most enthusiastically received, and many most gratifying remarks upon his personal appearance falling upon his ears and making him so extremely vain that, after having been, it was asserted, exactly two hours and a-half donning his wonderful Apollo dress, he was found by one of the grooms when the performance was all over—his turn had come at the end of the first part—attitudinising before his dressing-glass, completely oblivious of how the time was going.

It was declared by some that even then he could not be induced to return to his ordinary and less becoming clothes, but spent the whole night in the dressing-room, walking up and down ready for the next day's performance. He dare not lie down for fear of disarranging his wonderful costume, or lest he should rub some of the peach

bloom from his carefully made-up cheeks. But this was only a tale, for was there not a very pretty little girl in the sixpenny seats on the left-hand side of the entrance whose rather outspoken admiration had reached the handsome Apollo's ears?

Even while performing the somewhat difficult feat of retaining his balance upon one bare-backed steed while he drove half-a-dozen others at a furious rate round the arena, the delighted artist had time to reply to the remarks, not, of course, intended for his ears, by a look and a gesture which resulted in the confounding of all stories concerning the time he was dressing, for, much in love with his appearance as he was, could any gentleman break a so charmingly made appointment with a pretty girl who was going to wait at the entrance of the sixpenny seats when the performance was over?

Ah! what a wonderful language is that of the eye, and what a perfect master of it was our friend the little horse-trainer; how very charming the pretty girl, not a bit shy or stupid—I should think not—and how the pair of them enjoyed the grand display of fireworks which concluded a day the success of which had in a great measure been due to the very meritorious management of all things connected with the circus.

Yes, the signor enthusiastically exclaimed that the day had been most delightful; but he was not the only one of our friends who did so. Little Lizette had been very happy, as she told herself

when she returned home after the grand display of fireworks, which she had witnessed from a carefully-selected position, a little apart from the rest of the crowd, from whence she had a splendid view of all that passed.

But I do not think that it was the fireworks that Lizette enjoyed so much, indeed she scarcely knew why she enjoyed those days at all until—until—why do I pause? The truth must come out sooner or later; but there, I have been running away from my subject for some time, because I have something to tell which I am unwilling to relate. It is useless to turn coward any longer, so let me out with the truth at once. It seems to me that I have reached the centre of my tale; the second part had best begin in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT.

AT some length—for which I apologise most sincerely to my readers, at the same time promising for the future to try and prevent my pen from running away with me—I have said that my hero, as by courtesy I call him, on finding that, as he expressed it, he had missed his turn, determined if not to wait and hope, at least to wait and see what would happen next.

And what did happen was, as it is in most such cases, hardly what he expected.

For the first time in his life, while under an engagement—a fact which Jerry always affirmed must have been ordered by the adverse fates—he was disabled, that is, unable to appear as usual, much to the annoyance of the worthy manager, who was thus deprived of one of his most able assistants, the dancing-lesson being accounted among the most attractive features of the show, which promised, I may say, to fulfil even the most sanguine hopes entertained of it.

The accident, if so it may be called, happened

in this way. Jerry had owned to himself that hitherto he had wasted (?) far more precious moments than was necessary in the ante-room off the ring, both before and after his performance. He acknowledged that it had been wasted now, though formerly, had any one so much as suggested the idea, he would have scouted it with the greatest indignation. Now, however, things were different to what they were. For the future he determined to be merely up to time, though he owned to himself that he should sadly miss the stolen chats in which he had formerly indulged.

"Ah, well," he said, when he reviewed the matter in his own matter-of-fact way, "if I shall miss them, she won't, so there is no cause for me to grumble. I've had my chance and lost it."

And with this very sage, and at the same time unselfish piece of reasoning, the matter was settled.

This resolution, however, he found easier to make than to enforce. On the day of the opening of the show, as we have seen, he kept it with great determination, but on the day following, purely from absent-mindedness and force of habit, he made his way into the ante-room some time before his presence there was absolutely necessary. In the tent he found Lizette, apparently none the worse, indeed, to Jerry, looking all the more gay and smiling, for her gaiety of the night before.

She also was somewhat before her time, for the lady-rider had but just commenced her turn, the introduction to the public of her renowned steed, "Daystar," who, by-the-bye, had, on entering the ring, plainly shown himself to be, well, not in the best of moods, although he might have known from experience that such a display would bring him no good. Be he in a good or bad temper, he had a spirit on his back as equally determined as himself, and a skilled hand on his rein which knew how to let him feel his mistress's power. Under these circumstances, it certainly behoved "Daystar" not to attempt any little tricks on his own account.

Meanwhile, in the ante-room, Lizette greeted her old friend in her usual cheery manner, and ere long he found himself chatting away just—as he thought to himself with a smile which was not all merriment—as he had done in the old times, the said "old" times being separated from the "new" by one short month.

Not for long, however, was he allowed to enjoy this rather questionable pleasure; after a few moments he heard a step behind him and knew, so keen-sighted had he become all at once, by the sudden light which glanced into the brown eyes, which, even while they had danced so merrily in answer to his sallies, had ever and anon wandered, all unbidden by their owner, in the direction of the curtained entrance—knew only too well that "some one" was nigh.

Nor was he wrong.

The young ring-master, for he it was, nodded carelessly in answer to our hero's unusually hearty salutation, then greeted his companion with some low words in their own tongue.

Jerry all of a sudden wished himself "further," as he phrased it, and was seeking about vaguely in his own mind for an excuse to dissolve the trio into a duet, which he knew would be more agreeable to all concerned, when something occurred which led to far more serious consequences than one would have dreamed of at the time.

Feeling somewhat *de trop*, as he would have expressed it had he understood French, which he didn't—though, to be sure, he often wished he understood another sort of gibberish, as he called it in a half-angry, half-joking way, and then gave himself, both figuratively and literally speaking, a good shake, accompanying the same with an admonition which he had very frequently administered of late, relative to his not talking nonsense,—as I have said, feeling, if not being able to express the sentiment in words, owing to his having received a very defective education (a fact which he had lately commenced to regret most sincerely), that he was not exactly the right man in the right place, Jerry drew gradually on one side, with a view to making his escape altogether as soon as an opportunity presented itself.

Meanwhile, once more, for the second time, some words which passed between the couple at his side reached his ears, to be treasured up unconsciously with other little pieces of evidence

which by-and-by he would have given worlds not to have possessed.

The two spoke in English this time, so that he had no cause now to wish he could understand "gibberish." After some inquiries as to how she felt after her gaiety of the night before, made with a solicitude which the relations between the two seemed to warrant, the ring-master pressed some new favour upon Lizette, which she at first archly refused. It was only a request which she had often granted before, and by the young German's manner it was easy to see he paid no account to her withholding her consent at first—he knew well that for a little while she would make the prettiest show of rebellion in the world, at least so one onlooker called it, but in the end would surrender in the most childlike, innocent way possible.

Why, twenty times already the same little farce had been acted, and each time with the same result.

With a humility which no doubt to Lizette made his homage doubly fascinating, because of his usually haughty bearing, Carl would beg permission to present her with some flowers, as though not willing to press his gifts unless they were acceptable, asking what she would like best, in order that he might be sure to please her.

Lizette, little innocent that she was, would protest that he should not waste his money upon her, adding all sorts of excuses intended to support her own argument, but, as a rule, only tending to give strength to the opposite one, because of one

all-powerful piece of reasoning which, apparently, the young German was not too haughty to accept, completely ignoring the fact that it required far more courage to do this than to act without permission in all those minor offices put together about which he expressed himself so diffident.

But there, I suppose with Jerry that this far weightier matter had long ago been signed, sealed, and settled, and this little ceremony about the flowers was only one of the many little tricks and artifices which are used in order that the course of love may not be unbroken, if so tiny a break can be counted, for judging by the rule of contrary, no love that is "smooth" can be "true." (I know one person who would have been very much inclined to doubt the truth of this statement, had any one ventured to suggest it to him).

Anyhow, Lizette, as I have said, seemed to firmly believe in it, and the young ring-master had to use many and powerful arguments before he could gain permission to do as he wished.

This, however, he always managed to do, and the end of it was, Lizette would appear at the next performance with some of her chosen flowers nestling in the bosom of her dress, the same to be carefully treasured, with many others gradually becoming dry and withered in the faded satin case which had once contained a sweet tribute of affection "from a friend," as was notified in the lid, the said tribute being in the shape of half-a-pound or so of chocolate creams.

On the day, therefore, of which I write, as Jerry

listened half-unconsciously to what passed, when all else had failed to enlist the required permission, a low, whispered remark which he did not catch made the warm colour flush into Lizette's face as she suddenly turned her laughing gaze from that of her companion, her eyes seeking the floor once more to hide the treacherous sparkle which might have given her questioner an answer for which he had not yet asked—fool that he was to delay, when the reply would have been given so willingly.

All the response that Lizette's lips framed was in a suddenly-grown shy tone, which to Jerry told the tale some one else was so slow in reading.

"Yes, yes, you may do as you wish. Indeed I am happy to let you. I have been longing to have some honeysuckle for ever so long." (Did she know, I wonder, that in the language of flowers, so dear to all lovers, these blossoms meant the bonds of love? I wonder—) "Yes, I will have some honeysuckle, since you will be so kind. I wanted to ask you, but I was afraid. It may be expensive and a trouble to get. I—"

"A trouble!" interrupted a low, earnest voice, yet not so low but that Jerry heard every word so impressively uttered. "Do you not know that I would do anything in the world for you? I would give my life for yours, and if my death—"

At the ominous word a little white hand stole swiftly out and rested with a gesture of fear upon the speaker's dark-blue-sleeved arm, while a pleading voice said, with tell-tale haste, "Nay, nay, do not speak of death. It is like parting—so sad, I—"

Jerry dared listen to no more. Already he blamed himself for playing the eavesdropper, but that not without paying for it by more than one quickly-suppressed pang of jealousy, which even he was not quite proof against, invulnerable as he deemed himself.

As though he had been a thief caught in the act, he turned hastily away, and would have crossed to the other side of the tent.

As he did so, loud sounds of applause announced that the then going on performance was at an end.

At the same moment the curtains over the entrance were flung aside. Every one drew back a little to prepare for "Daystar's" coming, which, to judge by his exit and future conduct, might not be exactly a quiet one—every one but some one who was so absorbed in completing an unfinished sentence which a fearful, loving, trusting heart dictated, that she paid no heed to the danger which threatened herself.

There was a shout of "Look out!" "Mind there!" "Hold him in, Rose!" and Lizette, her words stayed on her lips, felt herself seized by a strong arm, which, ere she knew where she was, had pushed her, not roughly but firmly, against the side of the tent.

"Daystar's" entry, as had been expected, was not by any means a quiet one, in fact he had come with a rush, kicking and plunging violently, in spite of the administration of a good dose of the whip, delivered with no light hand, one of his

muscular fore-legs coming within dangerous proximity to the little fancy-rider's unconscious form, who must of a certainty have been hurt but for the timely interposition of one², whose ever-watchful eye saw the danger.

She out of its reach, the animal plunged a second under the quick lashes of the whip, then, cowed and obedient, trotted back into the ring, that its mistress might acknowledge the applause bestowed upon her.

The grooms dropped more than one oath, in company with a wish of Mr Petman's to the effect that his rider would handle the fiery brute better—though I doubt if this was possible under the circumstances—and then turned in the direction of Lizette to see if she were hurt.

"It's all right," in answer to their anxious inquiries, for the little fancy-rider was no small favourite, as I have said, "Miss Hartzmann is not hurt; but I think for the future it would be better for one of the men to lead the horse off when it's got its tempers. It isn't safe in here."

It was Jerry who spoke, for it was our hero who, by this little incident, was able to be of service to Lizette. It was only a trifling service, it is true, but he who had rendered it, was only her friend, he who had never asked favours of her with flattering humility, he who had made no verbal dedication of himself to her service, he, and not her chosen lover, upon whose lips the words still lingered, "You know I would do anything in the world for you—I would give my life for

yours”—high-flown sentiments clad in our sober, matter-of-fact language; yet from a lover's lips surely should have had one ring at least of truth about them, but which now and long afterwards echoed in Jerry's ears with a mocking earnestness which caused him many a pang.

But he put it from his mind then, as he did every thought which was not exactly in favour of Lizette's chosen—well—cavalier.

The ring-master had been so intent on listening to her quaintly-worded remonstrance that naturally he had no ears for aught else.

It was left to Jerry to have eyes, ears, and heart too, all ready at a moment's notice to do service for her he loved best in the world.

And this he had not rendered without injury to himself.

"It's all right," he said, in answer to Lizette's anxious inquiry, and then he became aware that his arm still rested round her waist, a fact of which a pair of keen grey eyes was also cognisant.

With a short dry laugh he hastily withdrew it, then, although he had said it was "all right," when he was free from this support winced slightly, and, raising his left foot from the ground, stood on one leg for some moments, while the ring-master hastily claimed Lizette's attention ere she had time to say a word of thanks, a circumstance which did not escape Jerry's notice, but he only smiled and called himself a fool for his pains to expect to be rewarded for so slight a service.

"I believe the beast has hurt yer, Mr Jerry,"

said Smith the groom, after staring at him open-mouthed for some moments.

"Well, I have been trying to find out whether he has or not for the last week," said Jerry, laughing nervously, but stopping short and wincing again.

Just then Mr Petman came up, and Jerry was bound to acknowledge to him that he feared "Daystar" had left him a mark of his affection in the shape of an impression of his hoof upon the front of his left foot.

"I'm afraid I'm no good for to-day," said our hero, who did not cut a very dashing figure for a rescuer, as he stood looking with an air of regret comical to behold at his disabled member. "It's a mortal pity the beast was in such a hurry. He might have waited till after my turn."

With this very logical sentiment Mr Petman heartily agreed, and the lady rider might have met a reception on her re-entrance to the ante-room which would have been hardly as gratifying as the one her victory over her stubborn steed had gained from the admiring audience, who fortunately did not witness the little *contretemps*, already described, had it not been that at that moment the manager's presence was urgently demanded at the pay-box to assist in counting the returns, a duty he resigned to no one.

Fuming and grumbling at the accident as though he, and not our hero, were the sufferer—though at the same time in a way that was most flattering to Jerry's capabilities as employed

in his service—the manager departed, and our disabled friend prepared to do the same.

All this time Lizette was totally unaware that anything was amiss, so eagerly and completely did the young ring-master claim her attention.

He was talking rapidly to her in a low earnest tone in German, so that what they said Jerry could not understand, but he did not doubt that the incident had unloosened more than ever the lover's willing tongue. Judging by his excited manner, this certainly seemed likely, while it was easy to see that his interest pleased the object of it to no small degree; though she laughingly declared that there was no cause for fear, she was not hurt in the least, not noticing that if she had not suffered some one else had. Jerry had himself told her he was all right, and now Carl Hermann claimed all her attention, and left her neither eyes nor ears for aught else.

As, for the third time, she repeated her assurance that she was totally unhurt, the cause of the slight mishap, the lady rider, re-entered the tent, this time with her steed under perfect control.

She was totally unaware of the mischief she had caused, and letting the reins hang loosely over her horse's neck, no doubt to show how perfectly fearless she was of the devil in him, as the grooms called his tempers, held up her hand, revealing how the glove she wore had been torn in her struggle for mastery.

She glanced round the ante-room carelessly,

and then the horse came voluntarily to a standstill a few feet from the couple in the corner, who were too absorbed in each other to notice her entrance.

Disdaining one of the grooms' proffered help, she dismounted alone, stood for several moments patting "Daystar," then suddenly turned and addressed Carl Hermann, calling him by name in a clear, commanding voice, and beckoning him to her side.

With an ill-suppressed gesture of impatience, and a few words of apology to his companion, the ring-master went towards her.

It was only for some trivial reason she had summoned him. Would he see that some part of "Daystar's" harness, which had been roughly used in the late struggle, was repaired?—a little matter she might easily have placed in the hands of one of the grooms. But then the well-trained horse and all its belongings was of far too much importance to be trusted to the mercies of any one of the men.

In company with many others in the ante-room, Lizette turned and looked at the lady-rider.

She was the same girl to whose presence as a stranger in the show on the previous day I called my reader's attention.

She wore the same velvet habit and beaver hat, the latter resting on a coil of beautifully-braided black hair. The former she drew in folds over her arm, as she played with the silver-mounted riding-whip she held in her hand.

Her face was flushed with her late victory, and as she bent her rather bold black eyes upon Carl Hermann, there was an air of animation about her which made her appearance singularly striking.

Lizette eyed her with a rather puzzled look on her face, and just at that moment Smith came up with some paltry excuse to claim her attention, eager as a dog to catch a crumb of kindness from the hand that had caressed him.

Nor was he disappointed. Jerry, from where he stood, noted with pleasure how the little fancy-rider greeted him with a smile and a few kindly words, such as were so dear to him, and smiled himself to see the look of almost slavish adoration which set strangely upon his ugly face, and then sighed, suddenly thinking that even to this half imbecile this fairy of his castle had smiles and pleasant greetings, while his service, slight as it was, was not even considered worthy of notice.

The next moment he once more called himself to order for grudging the poor fellow the little drop of comfort in his dreary life. Lizette, meanwhile, all unconscious of the war of feeling which was going on not a dozen yards from her, stood chatting to the groom. Presently her glance once more strayed across the tent, and all of a sudden a look of intelligence broke across her face.

At length she had discovered the key to the riddle which had been puzzling her, where had she seen the lady-rider before? for hers was a face which was not easily forgotten. But handsome as it was, Lizette's remembrance of it was

by no means happy, for it recalled to her mind that dreary night not so very long ago when, worn out with her journey in the bad weather, hopeless and cheerless, I first introduced her, a very forlorn-looking figure, to my readers—that night when my story opened, and she found her way into the midst of the hurry and bustle of the show, where, for want of a little kindness of heart, she had met with such a chilling reception to her inquiries, upon which for her depended so much.

Yes, there was no mistaking it. This was the same girl whose ungraciousness had destroyed all hope in the tired little stranger's breast, and sent her out once more in the cheerless night, which to her appeared no less cold and forbidding than her reception by those of whom she had merely asked a little information which it would have cost so little to have given at least with courtesy—sent her forth alone and cheerless until she had found one friend in Jerry. Surely, if she remembered the unhappiness of that night, this fact at least was pleasant to her memory.

But no; it scarcely entered Lizette's mind, for with her recognition of the stranger, a sudden thought flashed into her mind. There had been someone else who had not been as courteous as he might: the tall, well-coated fellow who had been talking with such marked impressment to the strange girl. Who was he? Half involuntarily Lizette turned to where her lover stood, and saw him bow and smile in answer to some question

put to him by the lady-rider, just as he had done on that night when Lizette's timid inquiries for the manager of the show, to which she had been accidentally directed, had interrupted what was evidently an interesting *tête-à-tête*.

Yes, of course, there they were again, before Lizette's eyes, as on that night — talking and laughing gaily like old friends.

As the discovery forced itself into the little German girl's mind, a sudden flush mounted to her face, and whether it was that she was so much taken up with wondering why she had not recognised Carl Hermann before, I cannot say, but Smith's chatting continued unheeded in a way that made the poor fellow presently return to his work positively wretched, for fear he had done anything to incur his mistress's displeasure. Meanwhile the discovery she had made for some moments impressed Lizette anything but pleasantly, but by-and-by she shook off the feeling, called herself silly for having entertained it—Carl would be sure to satisfactorily explain his conduct: it is easy to find an excuse when so sure of its being readily accepted. No doubt he was tired and worried; his talk with this young lady had perhaps been only business in which he did not wish to be interrupted, and no doubt, so bedraggled and worn did his questioner look that he might, in the brief, hurried look which he took at her in the dim light of the tent, have taken her for some suppliant for charity.

Oh, Lizette! Lizette! what a foolish heart is yours, to suppose that before he whispered those honeyed words in your ear, your lover had claimed no lady's attention save on a matter of business; to plead as an excuse for want of courtesy the strange theory that any true gentleman should ever be too tired or worried, and even debase your womanly vanity so far as to admit that, under any circumstances, so weary and poverty-stricken did you look that you were beneath his pity. Lizette! Lizette! the excuse you find only makes the fault all the worse: it is far more foolish than the sudden cloud which falls over your gaiety as you watch those two, the stranger and your much-excused lover, talking so freely.

For a change has come over Lizette, and while she stands apparently lost in thought—with the scene of that dreary night before her eyes, when one face, the smiles on which she has grown to live, looked on her in her wretchedness with cold unfeeling, and the other, which now smiles so gaily up at her lover, drove her away with cold, haughty words—a shadow seems to have fallen on all around, and Lizette shivers, she scarce knows why, as she waits with strange eagerness the return of her lover to her side.

Nor was she kept long in a state of expectancy. In a few moments Mr Petman bustled in, and going up to the girl, reprimanded her in a not too gentle manner for having caused the clown's mishap. She defended herself warmly at first, in a way which showed that she did not share

the awe in which the rest of the company held the hot-headed manager.

“By ——!” said one of the grooms, using an oath, the better to express his admiration; “she’s a plucky one, she is. A regular chip of the old block, and no mistake. Did you see how she took it out of ‘Daystar?’ and he’s no small handful to manage, I can tell you—gets the very devil in him at times. But she’s his match—ay, and more than his match. Look at the way she’s taking it out of the old man. My ——! if the horse has got the Old Nick in him, so has she. Birkett says she’s a perfect fury when her blood’s up. Not married? Bless you, no; though I do hear as how she’s had more than one swell a-hanging after her in London, only her temper’s made ’em cut before they got the halter round their necks, or in front of them, as Merry-go-round says—though in my opinion it’s round his neck wit’ t’other end tied to a good beam as’d be the most enjoyable. Not but what she’s a handsome girl. Look how she’s a-shrugging her shoulders at Mr Hermann behind the old man’s back. It’s quite a wonder for her to be so haffable; she’s that jolly proud, as a rule, that she might be a duchess of Lord knows where. Talk of ‘Daystar’ being a handful to manage, why, it’ll take more than one man—even if he’s as well up in the work as the boss—to keep her from her tricks. Lord love him! I pity the man who tries to train her. She won’t take to the ring easy, I’m thinking. I wouldn’t like to have

the job; she's up to a few tricks, I'll swear. If she once set her mind on a thing she'd do it, you bet your life."

Jerry smiled to himself at the groom's reading of the lady-rider's character, which, judging from outward appearances, was certainly warranted.

The words, too, reached Lizette's ears while she assumedly occupied herself with chatting to Smith; and, in turning to look with some curiosity at the stranger, she met the gaze of Carl Hermann as he regained her side.

He evidently had heard what the groom had said, and his eyes travelled slowly from the girl to whom he had just been speaking to our little heroine, as she turned towards him.

Some deep thought was evidently in his mind, for for once he did not respond to her smile, but turning to the groom who had spoken, bade him angrily go about his work. It might have been that the young ring-master did not choose that the fellow's not too refined language should fall upon Lizette's ears; his own inborn sense of refinement made his speech a marked contrast to that of his fellows, and what was more natural than that, with the instinct and manners of a gentleman which he possessed, he should regret one he loved should have to listen to such coarse language?

At any rate, the tone in which he ordered the loiterer to cease wasting his time was none too pleasant, and, turning to Lizette, he once more

claimed her attention, with what was evidently a lover-like apology for having left her so long.

Lizette, in her naïve manner, declared he needed no excuse, and cut short his protest by asking,—

“Who is that young lady? She is new, is she not? I have not seen her before.”

Carl Hermann smiled in answer to the quaintly-worded question, and said,—

“You are right; she is new here, if by that you mean she is a stranger; but you have seen her before, I think. She is Mr Petman’s only daughter, Rosa.”

“Oh,” said Lizette, “that is why she is so frank with him. I envy her—not for being his daughter, but because she does not seem to have any fear of him. They say she has a bad temper, and is very proud. I see she has scarcely taken notice of any one but you.”

“That is all nonsense, you will see. I will introduce you to her.”

The lady-rider had given her horse in charge of the groom, and, crossing the tent, passed within a few paces of the couple.

“No, no; not now,” said Lizette, drawing, she knew not why, back a little; but the ring-master stepped forward, and, under the plea that she was his fellow-countrywoman, and a stranger to the company since the lady-rider’s last visit, presented the two girls of such different stamp to each other.

The manager’s daughter bowed carelessly, not to say haughtily, while her bold black eyes swept the little rider from top to toe.

"I don't seem to have heard your name before," she said; "but I fancy I have seen your face somewhere."

With this she passed on to where Jerry still stood on one leg, meditating how he should hobble to his dressing-room.

Not too graciously she apologised for having been the cause of his mishap.

"It is most unfortunate 'Daystar' should have chosen to disable you. My father could spare any one better than a clown."

This was said, not as a compliment to Jerry's value in the show, but as a regret that there was such a scarcity of talent in the company just when it was most needed.

"If Miss Hartzmann—is that her name?—had had her eyes open it need not have happened. You had better have your foot seen to at once."

And before Jerry could utter a word such as had risen to his lips in defence of his friend, with a not too graciously expressed hope that the injury was not so great as he thought, Miss Petman drew her habit over her arm and passed out of the ante-room.

"So that is Miss Petman," said Lizette, following her with her eyes. "She is very fine—handsome is it, you say?—but"—as though bound in her honesty to admit her true feelings—"I am sure I should not like her."

"Nonsense," said Carl Hermann, also taking a survey of the tall figure. "You should not pay attention to Burton's stable gossip. That fellow

has an ill word for every one." Then, more lightly, "Certainly his description was not likely to impress you, but it is as well you should know her. She has not only much influence over her father, but also some in town, and it is as well not to miss opportunities."

It was a wonder to hear the rather lazy young German so wideawake to advantages of this sort ; but Lizette was too much occupied with other thoughts to notice the fact.

She was revolving in her own mind whether or no she should tell Carl of the true reason for her expressing her dislike, so suddenly conceived, for the manager's handsome daughter. At length, though her child-like nature made her as frank with him as even the most ardent lover could have wished, she decided to let the memory of that night be buried away with the other dark hours which she had known while the storm of trouble swept over her head. The sun shone now, why wilfully cast a shadow over its brightness by such a silly fancy ?

Silly fancy—that was what Lizette called it now that her lover was once more by her side, his handsome face smiling down at her, his soft, inducing voice whispering all sorts of beautiful thoughts into her ear, instead of being summoned, as they had been, to pay demanded, not proffered, homage to the imperious daughter of the manager. Yes, Lizette had grown sad, and shivered when she had seen the two for the second time together, when the

magic of love's presence was gone; but the moment that returned, all shadows fled away before its brilliance, and little Lizette laughed at her own folly, and listened heart and soul to her lover's words.

His words!

As from his far-off corner Jerry watched the two, he wondered whether the lover was putting her he loved to the proof, as he had said; whether he had sealed his heart, which had been won from him with that of her who had won it, by that sacred promise which is the first step to the more sacred tie which should bind the two souls that beat in unison together for ever.

Jerry wondered, and then, suddenly roused from the reverie into which he had fallen by a consciousness that his foot was every moment becoming more painful, he limped off back to his dressing-room, and from thence, in the garb of a rational mortal, to his lodgings. Here he set to work to doctor his injured foot, which, to tell the truth, had received no light kick from "Daystar's" iron hoof, and already caused him considerable pain.

"But what did that matter?" as he said to himself in his queer way on ascertaining the extent of the damage. "That kick, by rights, belonged to the little fancy rider; and had he not for some time past wished he might have something which was hers? Now that he had secured what would be a lasting remembrance, what cause had he to grumble?"

Having comforted himself with this sage piece of reasoning, our hero took himself up sharp, as he called it, being suddenly endued with the idea that his logic sounded somewhat like sarcasm—a sort of cat's play, velvet paws with hidden needles—for which he always expressed a most extreme contempt, quite in accordance with his open, blunt character.

Therefore, giving himself a severe rating—a habit he had acquired lately, and practised with a rigour which would have done credit to the most devout penitent,—he proceeded to do his best to erase this remembrance of his service to the little fancy-rider, by the application of such remedies as would be likely to occur to a single man, who had scarcely known a day's illness in his life—a fact which spoke well for the tumbling trade, profession, calling—whatever name it goes by, as being conducive to general health.

The nine-oils was therefore called into use, being obtained from a most unheard of creation, which must have been invented especially to bestow upon him the sweeter sympathy which had been denied him elsewhere, in the shape of a good-natured landlady, who, having a deeply-rooted admiration for any one and anything connected with the profession—her husband having held, once upon a time, the office of groom at a London circus, but had been since called away to fulfil a more important office in a bigger show. His widow, therefore, readily gave one of his

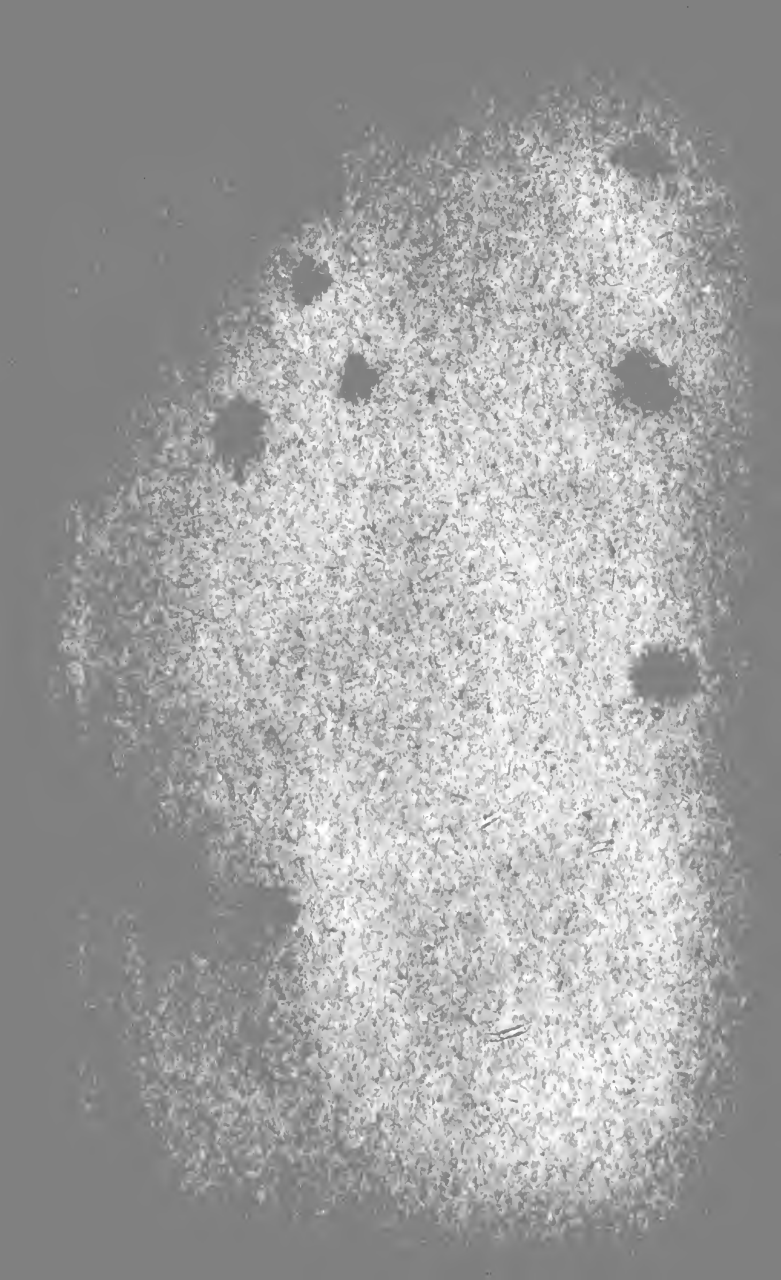
honoured brethren in the earthly brotherhood the solace of her motherly kindness in his "sore extremity."

She produced, therefore, with speed, her sovereign remedy for all ills, and declaring "as how it was the nastiest kick as ever she had set eyes on," proceeded to assist our injured friend in the application of the said sovereign remedy, at the same time keeping up an incessant account of all the cases in which it had proved infallible.

END OF VOL. I.







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